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Pat M'Carty His Rhymes

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CLASS OF 1877

PAT M'CARTY

PAT M'CARTY

FARMER, OF ANTRIM

HIS RHYMES
WITH A SETTING

BY

JOHN STEVENSON

LONDON
EDWARD ARNOLD
1903
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INTRODUCTORY

Of Ireland the average Englishman knows little. Of Irishmen he knows two kinds. Travellers who have landed at Dublin and penetrated to Glasnevin, or followed the coastline as far as Howth, have described one of these in numerous books and magazine articles. Associated with pigs, sticks, and potatoes, he is found wearing a tattered old hat, a long-tailed coat of grey homespun, knee-breeches, and ventilated shoes. Nature has given him a long upper-lip and a nose turned skyward. He says, "Tare an' ages, ye spalpeen, holy murther, the divil, arrah, be jabers," and more to that pattern. His wife is himself in a minor key. She says "The saints presarve us" with any communication circumstances may require. Her name is Norah; she dusts a chair with her apron and curtseys very nicely to an Englishman.

He of the second class is mystic, wonderful. Our knowledge of him is from the poets. His background is of wolfdogs and round towers, his gaze is backward to the old time of collars of gold, and he carries a harp, for his use of which please see Moore's Irish melodies.

Strange to say, we who have been born and bred on the island have not been able to find the Englishman's Irishmen. The failure may be due to lack of powers of observation, or to the common inability to see the wood for trees.

If the English travellers have observed and described correctly, it is certain that variations from the type are extremely numerous over areas as yet by them unvisited. One of these variations is described in this book or rather is

allowed, in his rhymes, to describe himself, his manner of thinking and living, his land of Antrim, and the people, plants, and animals that share it with him.

Critics may object that Pat M'Carty is not consistently ignorant or learned. He is irregular—saying old, auld, and ould in different rhymes. He deals picturesquely with *museum* and *algebra*, making them "Musy Um" and "ould Jeb Ra," and yet his spelling of words more uncommon is, at times, with the Century Dictionary. He answers objectors in this fashion. When ploughing a stiff clay field he wears boots that could not be received in polite society. He has a black suit which he wears at funerals. He has another costume for weddings and christenings. For a mixed event he may wear his best breeks with his second best waistcoat. The clothing of his person is by him decided according to the needs of time, place, or occupation, and he asks that a like discretion be allowed to him in the clothing of his thoughts. When these are concerned with the field and common things, there may be a smear of clay on the words he uses; when they are concerned with things other, higher or different, the words properly change in colour, texture, or quality.

The book will be a disappointment to some by reason of its omissions. There is not a Saxon tyrant nor a harp in the whole collection, the shamrock is only mentioned once, and Pat says nothing about the wrongs of his country. I do not minimise these wrongs. The tears they brought are still in the eyes of Dark Rosaleen, and for three hundred years to come there will be a catch in her voice when she sings because of them. And often yet her "holy, delicate white hands" will gird sons to fight for her, but the fight will not be with sword and pike.

JOHN STEVENSON.

COOLAVIN, BELFAST.

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THE RHYMER'S FOREWORD

I never likit weel the pen,
I tak' wi' joy the pleugh in han';
The rules o' varse I dinna ken,
I'll haud the pleugh wi' any man.
Here is no poet born wi' wings,
Remember that, my worthy fren',
It's but a farmyard muse that sings
O' country life an' country men.

These rhymes that scent o' fields an' trees
Are no' to read in study chair
Wi' glesses on to criticeese
Wi' graimmar an' the dictionaire.
Ye'll keep them then an 'oor to pass
Some day ere simmer's coorse has run,
While ye lie lazy on the grass
By some auld dykeside in the sun.

I

HOME AND THE MAN

THE land is high on the east coast of Antrim. And above the cliffs there are, at places, platforms or small table-lands like that on which Garron Tower is built, and which geologists say are old landslips from the hills behind. On one of these is the little farm and the broad low white-washed cottage that belong to Pat M'Carty. The hills are near enough to appear overhanging, and far enough away to put on, every evening, the blue veil of mist that makes even inconsiderable heights look grand. A mountain burn has made for itself a way through the landslip to the sea, and just at the top of the northern slope of the wide gorge it has worn, and inland a few hundred yards, appears the gable of the cottage. Down the incline that ends at the stream side and fully exposed to the south is the orchard; only when the east wind blows is it cold here, even in winter, for the sheltering south bank is high and steep. The arms of the old grey-lichened apple trees meet and mingle, and under them is a thick green sward, gay in spring with countless daffodils. Through the orchard is a zig-zag path down to the singing burn and along to the beach and the boat. Half-way down the bank it passes a stone-lined recess, where is the old well. Some hand, long forgotten, has carved on the lintel the rude representation of a head between the letters

I M

with other forms worn by time nearly to the level of the

stone face, and believed to represent pickaxe, square, and mallet. The work is certainly very old; the oldest inhabitant has nothing to say about it, and tradition is probably correct in ascribing the construction of the well and the carving overhead to the monks of an abbey the crumbling ruins of which are not far off.

Let into the wall of the cottage near the front door is an inscribed sandstone bearing the letters J. A. and the date 1798. The initials are known to be those of the builder, a James Armstrong, and below them is a four-line inscription which looks like verse but is not. It reads:—

AT · Y^{E} · EXPIRATION · OF · Y^{E} · LEASE
Y^{E} · BUILDER · DOTH · DESIRE
Y^{E} · LANDLORD · LIVING · AT · THAT · TIME
WILL · CONSIDER · Y^{E} · BUILDER'S · CASE.

Behind the house are the farm buildings, barn, byre, and stable; a cart shed with a roof which is a peat-stack, and a bigger peat-stack on the ground beside it. Behind these again is the "planting," a grassy square, sparsely filled with tall grey ash trees, always with a magpie's nest in one of them. The lane passes the end of the barn and divides at the corner of the planting, going northward under rows of stunted sycamores to find the high road. The winds of a hundred years have made the trees squat and turned their branches all in one direction and away from the sea. They meet overhead and roof the little road, making in spring and summer a sweet, cool darkness that is paradise for the primrose, the violet, and the fern on the banks below. Westward the lane wanders through the fields to where the farm ends against the rocky hill-foot in a wilderness of whin and bracken.

More about Pat's home and surroundings will appear later on; it is time to say a word or two about the man himself.

Old ladies, in this part of the country, when asked their age have a trick of answering, "I am as old as my little finger." Pat confesses to the same age. Should the answer be considered not informing, the reader may place the rhymer somewhere in the forties. It is useless to attempt his portraiture by words; those who "wrastle thro'" these rhymes will fit him with a face and a figure long before the end, and their conceptions will be as near the truth as the image which would follow description.

Brought up in the cottage he occupies, Pat was early affected by the grandeur of his surroundings and tried to express his feelings in verse, consciously modelling his compositions on the styles of the great poets. Love and pride of country were very strong, and he had the ambition to bring honour and renown to the land and place of his birth by writing verses in the grand style. Doubtless these boyish attempts were very crude. Pat himself says that he knows now they were grandiloquent where they were intended to be grand, and that the fate they met was merited. They were exhibited to the old schoolmaster—Tim of Lugar School—celebrated in a later rhyme. Tim was unsympathetic, told the boy bluntly that poetry was "not in his line," advised him to burn the verses, and poor Pat, more modest and docile than the average budding poet, took the advice.

For a long time after the holocaust Pat wrote nothing. When he did begin again there was no question of following the style of any poet, nor indeed of having a style at all. He did not even think of "poetry." The humorous side of things always appealed to him, and, grown to manhood and with manhood's cares, he finds relief and recreation in a ridiculous mental presentation of a situation or incident or sequence of events. When the picture pleases him he may give it permanence in rhyme. A dominating feature suggests the first line, and the unsought, unpremeditated rhythm of this decides the character and measure of the lines that

follow. The first-born words are rarely—it may be said, never—the first words of the story. They may belong to the beginning, the middle, or even the end of it. Having seized on them as fit for a part of the structure, his mind proceeds, in half-unconscious fashion and while he goes about his daily work, to fit lines before or after the first conceived, and so by accretions to both ends the work proceeds to completion.

The method is a curious one. It is as if one, accidentally finding a stone suitable for a lintel, should set up posts adequately strong to bear it, build walls to support these posts, make openings for windows in the walls, and so proceed to construct a house without fixed plan, determining the size and architectural character of each addition by its fitness in the building mind to come against its previously completed neighbour.

An intention to write and a choice of subject are not then necessary preliminaries to his verse-making. The first material for the building is the swinging line which flashes into existence at sight or conception of the inspiring person, thing, or action, and this may belong to the foundation, or the middle elevation, or the roof of the rhyme.

To explain his method is to say that Pat is no poet with a mission. A man whose hands find more than enough to do all day and every day; he has no time to sit in the poet's chair even if he had qualification and will. Here are no dark sayings, allusive or elusive; no involved, inverted words of the wise man; no mystery of condensation—a system of philosophy in a line of type—only the everyday outlooks and inlooks of a working man rumbled into rhyme, and getting a humorous twist in the doing of it.

If, with Pat, the faculty of seeing a humorous side to things be one or the main incentive to rhyme, another is his love of Nature in all her manifestations in this northern land. For him there are no dead things in the landscape. A mountain sleeps. The sea is pleased, wrathful, mournful,

it rejoices. The cliff rests, is bold, angry, or defiant. Even the high road can be tired. Others beside Pat see the changing looks on Nature's face, which may be due to atmospheric conditions, or be the reflex of the seer's mental or physical states. But to Pat the cliff not only appears to be bold, it knows it is bold, and consciously fights and vanquishes the angry sea. And his endowment of consciousness goes to things unaffected by the time of day, the temperature, or the clearness or cloudiness of the skies. Primroses for him are modest in varying degree, the bluebell knows she bows, other flowers are saucy or impudent, confiding and fearless, or timid with a pleading and beseeching look. When he sees the rootlet travelling to the only source of supply, and the tendril stretching out to the support it has not yet touched, he wonders if consciousness in plant life may not be one of the things undreamt of in our philosophy.

But whether this may be or not, flower and leaf are delights of life to Pat. He has been fairly successful as the world estimates success, but no contemplation of his modest growing wealth ever gives him half the delight he feels when he finds the strings of pink cones on the larches, or sees beneath an apple tree the year's first golden daffodil.

HOW TO BE HAPPY

IN PRAISE OF A FARMER'S LIFE

If ye wad be a happy man
I'll tell ye what ye'll dae;
Ye'll tak a wee bit farm o' lan'
O' thritty acres, say.
Ow'r muckle disna mak' for peace,
If sma' the farm, sma' care;
The joy o' sma' and sure increase
Will no' be yours wi' mair.

Noo when ye're oot a farm to find,
Ye'll seek it near the sea;
Wi' big blue heather hills behind,
Guid warm land let it be.
Ye'll need a rocky place or twa
To feed a dizzen sheep;
Rough places whaur the whins can blaw
And pale primroses peep.

Ye'll want an anshent abbey by
Wi' wa's half tumbled doon,
And elm branches maun be nigh
Enfoldin' it aroon.
Ye'll want a wheen o' craws to build
Amang the elm trees:
It's weel to hae a garden filled
Wi' flo'ers and skeps o' bees.

The hoose should hae a roof o' thatch,
For slates look cauld and grey,
And broon peat-stacks will brawly match
The colour o' the strae.
Sic things may no' come first to han',
But a' these can be had,
And when they're yours—get ready, man,
Ye're goin' to be glad.

Some mornin' when the year's in youth,
Some bonnie day in Spring,
A saft wind blawin' frae the sooth,
The early bee a-wing;
Sky rob'd in blue that human kind
As king or queen ne'er wore,
The misty purple hills behind,
The shinin' sea before.

A warm, bright sunshine floods the air
Ow'r red, fresh-labour'd fields,
Peat-stain in hollows, here and there
A bit o' colour yields.
The blue reek o' yer ain wee hoose
Is curlin' thro' the trees,
The craws, like school o' boys let loose,
Hae noisy made the breeze.

Ye watch the sawer saw his seed,
Ye hear the lav'rock sing,
That day ye cudna harm a weed,
Much less a leevin' thing.
Your thochts are warkin' micht and main
As busy as the bees,
They bring the monks to life again
Amang the elm trees.

A breakin' wave on neighb'rin' shore
Some story to them tells,
They mak' a child o' ye once more—
Ye gather stanes and shells.
Then frae this shore they quickly lead
To yet anither sea,
And One wha spak' o' sawin' seed
In far aff Galilee.

Your heart should throb wi' gladness then,
Be blithesome as the birds;
And feel a joy I dinna ken
The way t' express in words.
And if ye dinna simply rowl
In happiness that day,
Then *God forgie yer sinfu' sowl*
Is a' I hae to say.

HAME

HAME. What's hame?
A wee short word o' letters four.
But frae the store
O' langest words the tongue can claim
Nane's got, I wis,
Sic pow'r an Irish heart to touch,
Nane hauds in meanin' half as much
As this.

The hoose has share,
But it's not a' the word reca's.
Hame's mair than furniture and wa's,
O, far far mair.

What does it mean?
The cradle bed—the baby's chair,
A mither's love—a father's care.
The first things seen
By openin' een.

Days o' delight,
When daisies were a prize to gain;
A field, a wide and great domain
In bairn's aw'd sight.

Trees—posies sweet—
The birds—the butterflies—the bees—
The auld green-lichen'd aipple trees—
The lovers' seat
Where lives were knit—
The shaded well, clear, cauld as ice;
Nae after-tasted wine o' price
Refresh'd like it.

Childhood's romance—
The hopes and fears
O' later days and later years—
Each step's advance
To wider thought
And higher life—
The love o' brither, sister, wife,
Treasure unbought
Beyond compare—
Lov'd presences that still remain,
And memories, lang freed frae pain,
O' some that were—
Shadow and light—
Auld joys—auld pleasures magnified—
Sorrows ow'r which we one time sigh'd
Now silver'd bright.

Be it the aim
To put this in sic compass sma'
That one short word will hold it a'
That word is—Hame.

A SUNNY, WINDY DAY

A SUNNY, windy day in Spring,
White cloudlets scuddin' ow'r the blue,
A lark beside me takin' wing,
In song his ain true love to woo;
Green waves, white-crested, on the sea,
Their distant thunder on the sands,
A pair o' horse in front o' me,
And twa pleugh-handles in my hands;

Earth fresh-upturned; a flock o' crows
Sedately marchin' by my side,
A primrose on the bank that grows,
Wide-stretchin' fields wi' daisies pied;
The whins' sweet scent that on the breeze
Down frae the rocky moorland floats,
Gold daffodils that 'neath the trees
Shake out their dainty petticoats;
Blue peat-reek wheelin' like a bird,
A thocht o' her sae true and tried,
Who never once by look or word
Has made me wish our bands untied;
The wind, the wave, the flow'r, the field,
Sweet song o' bird, sweet thochts that rise,
Each one to me delight can yield,
But a' at once make Paradise!

A PEAT BOG

Black and ugly—do they ca' ye—bogland!
Ugly!—these acres purple-heather-spread!
These rocky knowes a-bleezin' wi' the whin-bloom!
Their een are blinded that the words have said.
Ugly!—wi' plumes o' canavan * the snowy
Noddin' guid morrow to the passer-by,
The nut-brown water-pools that lie wind-rippled,
Or stilly picturin' a second sky.
You wi' the life you carry on your bosom,
The bees at wark, the butterflies at play,
The lark that loves ye carollin' his anthems
Frae skies above ye a' the leevelang day.

* *Ceanabhan*—bog-cotton.

Ugly! wi' forest stretches o' the bracken,
The mossy dyke-sides' velvet green array,
The cluster'd rashes—battle spears of fairies,
A thousand thousand ready for the fray.
You—the hearth-happiness o' bygone ages,
The present nourisher o' life that stirs
Man's heat to be in unborn dreary winters
His light still slumberin' in buried firs,
Firs that are fragrant as that auld sweet cedar
That once on Lebanon its airms stretched wide.
Black—as the tents o' Kedar—are ye truly
But comely, comely as the king-sought bride.

SUMMER IN GLENARIFF

A TANGLED maze
O' leafy sprays
O' cherry, birch, and hazel tree;
Tough twisted cords o' wild woodbine
Hung on the airms o' larch and pine,
The briar roses trailin' free;
And up and high,
A dappled sky
All blue and white in streaks and spots,
And doon and through
Anither blue
O' water-wet forget-me-nots.
And bowin' bells
In dank green dells
All standin' wi' their eyes cast doon;
Ivy on stane, or twinit roon
The blossom'd lucky rowan tree;

Bee-haunted foxgloves in their prime,
Banks carpeted wi' scented thyme,
Or shy white wood anemone.
And violets—
Moss-cradled pets;
Green fern in paradise beside
The peaty stream that lilts and brawls
And tumbles in a hundred falls
In hurry doon to meet the tide.
And every plant and posy fair
That loves auld Antrim's soil and air,
And wi' these sights
For eyes' delights
The bonnie birdies' minstrelsie—
Picture and song in sweet accord.
Eastward in Antrim hath the Lord
Planted this garden fair to see.

CUSHENDALL

At night I hear the sea-gull's call;
From cloud-land as they pass ye by
They send ye doon a friendly cry—
The sea-bird loves ye, Cushendall.

The sycamores are braid and tall,
Green upon green their shades in spring,
And in their airms the thrushes sing—
The sang-bird loves ye, Cushendall.

The hills are near ye. Chief of all
That on the westward hem ye round,
Lies Lurig like a sleepin' hound—
O Lurig loves ye, Cushendall.

When, far away, night's shadows fall
On sons whose fate has been to roam,
They dream aboot the dear old home—
The exile loves ye, Cushendall.

And they, the lang departed, all
Who here liv'd, labour'd, lov'd, and pray'd,
Then saw themsel's the laid in Layde—
Their spirits love ye, Cushendall.

CUSHENDUN

For air that 'vigorates like wine,
For sichts to see and pleasure fine
Wi' rod and gun,
For sense o' lairgishness and space,
'Twill bother ye to find a place
Beats Cushendun.

Nae doot in France and ither climes
The skies are fairish bright at times,
But still the sun
Feels mair at hame in Antrim ways,
And keeps his verra brightest rays
For Cushendun.

That trout that's leapin' there sae high
Has nae design to catch a fly—
He jumps for fun;
For joy a recollection gives,
The cratur's glad to think he lives
At Cushendun.

Geologists that scart and scrape,
And pu' earth's boo'els oot o' shape,
Hae here a grun'
Unrivall'd for their digs and knocks,
There's just the cur'osest o' rocks
At Cushendun.

By livin' in a carefu' way
Ye think to eighty-five or sae
Your time may run,
You'd live a couple hunner year
(The air's sae mortial healthy here)
At Cushendun.

It's weel the nations o' the airth
Are sae content wi' leetle warth
For, else they'd run
Frae ev'ry pairt o' christendom,
The haill jing-bang wad want to come
To Cushendun.

They'd want a gret big ugly toon,
And wi' their reek and stour wad soon
Blot oot the sun
And ev'ry pleasant sicht frae view;
And that wad be the end o' you,
Sweet Cushendun.

AN ANTRIM GLEN

Its Sights, Its Scents, Its Sounds

Here's an auld proverb ;—mark it doon :
" God made the country,—man the toon."

Wha says the country's dull and drear,
His eyes wi' cities' smoke are dim ;
A city's roar has dull'd his ear ;
Delights o' scent are not for him.
O ! ye wha care for simple lays,
Come, hear a word in country's praise ;
Come wi' me to an Antrim glen,
See sights the country places yield,
Hear sounds sae dear to countrymen,
And smell the odours o' the field.

The Sights

What sight sae grand as dawn o' day !
The death o' night,
The birth o' light,
The black sky palin' into grey,
Grey warmin' to a rosy blush,
Like that, when sweetheart comes her way,
Ow'rspreads wi' sic a sudden rush
A lassie's cheek.
The colour changes—turns to gold ;
The hills that looked sae weird and cold,
Sae bare and bleak,
Mak' haste to change their night attire ;
The sea's aflame ! The clouds tak' fire.

And burn wi' crimson edges—Hush!
He comes—the Sun, the King o' Day—
He kisses hill, and tree, and bush,
And night's dark curtain rolls away.
Then, when the day declines, how grand
The pictures o' the sunset sky
As painted by the Almichty's hand,
Earth's greatest painters needna try
To copy these;
It passes skill o' mortal man,
Wi' canvas and his brush in han'
Sic tints to seize.
The hills maun love the sun, I wis,
Sae loth are they to lose his light—
They claim his first guid mornin' kiss,
They tak' his verra last guid night,
As eve her cloak unlooses,
And lets its velvet faulds fa' doon.
O sure, it's then a bonnie sight
To see the hill-taps bathed in light!—
(Ye canna see them in the toon
For reek and raws o' hooses).

My fairm-yard Muse a word may sing
O' sunlight here on Sunday;
Wi' us it's quate a diff'rent thing
Frae what we hae on Monday.
Earth then, far mair than ither days,
Drinks in the sun's life-givin' rays;
The country's flooded wi' a light
That's far mair sunny, far mair bright
Than that which shines on Monday.
Nature has on her dainty best,
The verra fields appear to rest,
For why—they know it's Sunday.

The sense o' rest is in the air,
A gledsome stillness ev'rywhere,
  A stillness not like ither days;
The sun's mair neebourly, and talks
To us as ow'r the sky he walks,
  And this, or something like it, says:
"It's Sunday mornin', rest your airm,
A wee bit langer nap's nae hairm;
Ye maunna fash yersel's the day
Aboot the pickle corn or hay;
Gang to yer kirk and hear the Word—
Think o' your duty to the Lord;
Veesit the sick and lonely folk,
And cheer them wi' a crack or joke;
Walk quately thro' the fields and lanes,
Forgetfu' o' your care and wark,
Or, if ye're weary, rest your banes,
And listen to the singin' lark;
Rest's guid for ye and for the lan',
The Sabbath's for the use o' man,
  But not for his abuses—
For man and cattle it's a boon."
  'Tis thus he speaks, and a' the while
  He smiles wi' sic a gracious smile.
(Ye canna see him smile in toon
  For reek and raws o' hooses.)

We wark a' day in sight o' sea,
That never-endin' mystery;
Now smilin' like a child at play,
And gently breakin' on the shore;
Now scowlin' in a fearsome way,
And rollin' wi' an angry roar,
Changin' a dizzen times a day
Frae black to blue, frae green to grey;

Now glimm'rin' in the noonday light,
And now reflectin' in the night
  The million diamonds o' the sky,
  O' God's ain crown the jewel'ry.
O that's a sight to gar us think
How sma' we are—how short our blink
O' life, wi' a' its hopes and fears!
How many hunner thoosan' years
These stars that nightly watches keep,
Hae sparkled in the inky deep,
That moaned and groaned as one in pain,
And, aifter silence, moaned again,
  Like one that's sad and weary.
While its great waves nae galleys bore
And nae man walked this lonely shore—
Sae lonely then, and dreary!

Ye canna ca' the country dull,
  When we can show sic sights as these—
The arrow flight o' divin' gull,
  When in the deep his prey he sees;
The waves o' light and shade that pass
  Like gambols o' some leevin' thing
Across the early corn or grass
  On any windy day in Spring;
The blue smoke o' the peat one sees
  Rise, pillar-like, when air is still,
'Gainst a dark backgrun' o' the trees,
  Or heather-covered moor or hill;
The primroses that look sae sweet,
  The buttercups that meadows fill,
The daisy carpets at our feet,
  The heather higher up the hill,
The wild rose and the hawthorn bloom
  That welcomes early simmer in,

The gowan and the yellow broom,
  The honeysuckle and the whin—
Not the puir scraggy whin that fills
  A hole in hedges here and there,
But it that grows amang the hills,
  And's nourished wi' the salt sea air,—
The sight's worth goin' miles to see:
  The man wha hasna seen it, he
    Has not begun to leeve,—
A mass o' gold frae tip to sod,
  Wi' spikes o' bloom that ow'r it rise,
Each like the flamin' sword o' God
  That barr'd the gate o' Paradise
    Frae Adam and frae Eve.
What use is it—this wonder—pray?
I hear some money-grubber say.
    I'm sure it has its uses,
Altho' I canna write them doon.
(Ye canna see the whins in toon—
    They winna grow near hooses.)

The Scents

O many a pleasant scent is here
At ev'ry season o' the year:
There's first the scents, as weel ye know,
O' a' the flowers I telt ye o',
Wi' mair that in the gardens grow.

When hawthorn dons her weddin'-goon
Somewhere aboot the first o' June
    (For that's the time she marries),
The air is maist delightfu' then
  Wi' odours sweet frae hedge and trees,

And nae words drappin' frae my pen
Can tell the scent the simmer breeze
That crosses bean-fields carries.
Then ye will like the smell o' hay,
As ev'ry person like it must;
And ye can smell on simmer day,
When rain fa's gently on the dust,
An odour not displeasin'.
The smell is guid the pine-tree yields;
And wind will carry to and fro
The smell o' burnin' weeds in fields—
I like that awfu' weel, altho'
It sets some folks a-sneezin'.
Then there's the perfume o' the lime,
And when the sun shines hot on thyme,
What grand scent it produces!
There's many another wee bit smell
O' which it's no' worth while to tell;
But sweet peat-reek I'll just set doon—
(It's no' like coal-reek o' the toon—
The reek o' raws o' hooses).

The Sounds

We hear the babble o' the brooks—
The thunder o' the waterfalls—
The pleasant cawin' o' the rooks—
The whistle when the curlew calls;—
We hear the plash o' risin' tides,
The rustle o' the wind in wheat,
The bleat o' sheep on mountain sides,
The bees' hum on the blossoms sweet.
We hear the tinklin' chapel bell
That calls the glenside folks to pray,—

The notes that on the breezes swell
At morn and eve on Sabbath day.
If e'er I veesit foreign pairts,
And hear great bells that shake the air,
See churches—trophies o' the airts—
Hear organ's peal and trumpet's blare—
Bewild'rin' and astoundin';
Thro' crash o' chimes and music's swell
I'll hear the tinkle o' that bell
In glen o' Antrim soundin'.

And then we hae the song o' birds—
The mavis wi' his low, sweet note
That canna be described in words;
The lark, whose never-tirin' throat,
Frae the far regions o' the sky
Pours doon a flood o' melody;
The robin's short and simple lay
That never fails the ear to please,
The yoit's * lang chitter that, they say,
Asks breed and butter, but no cheese.

I maist forgot the bird o' Spring—
The cuckoo and his welcome note;
There's many a bird that tries to sing,
Maks nae sic music wi' his throat.
I'm weel aware, that, as to brood,
His reputation's no' sae guid;
His sendin' o' his young to dwell
In nests he hasna bigg'd † himsel'
A cunnin' kind o' ruse is;

* Pronounced *yoyt*, the yellow-hammer. In its curious twitter, ending in a long note, the country people profess to hear the words: "A little bit of bread and butter, but no che-e-e-e-se."

† Built.

But I forgie the graceless loon,
His cry has sic a pleasin' soon'—
(Ye canna hear the cry in toon—
He hates the sight o' hooses).

IRELAND

WHAT land is there like Ireland
To hold in sweetest thrall
The hearts of sons and daughters
Let good or ill befall!
God save her, pray her children,
Wherever they may roam,—
The green land of the shamrock,
Wet with Atlantic foam.

In Ireland there are voices
In winds and in the waves;
The stranger never hears them
How much soe'er he craves.
Before their words mysterious
Can sound to list'ning ears
The blood must flow in Ireland
For twice a hundred years.

Whence are these sounds the Irish
Hear sounding evermore,
On moorland, on the mountain,
By lake and wild sea-shore?
They come from saints and heroes,—
Old are the graves they fill,
But o'er the land that nurs'd them
Their spirits hover still.

What are they like, these voices?
Like music borne on breeze—
Like song from ancient galleys
Ploughing the northern seas.
Like chant of men of battle,
That march with swinging tread.
Like sighs,—like mournful wailing
Over a lov'd one dead.

What say these spirit voices
To all that feel their thrill?—
They tell in wordless stories
Of love and warlike skill.
They speak the joy, the sadness,
The laughter and the tears
Of Ireland's great departed
Thro' centuries of years.

O land of sunset glories,
Lone island of the west,
Of all lands to thy children
The fairest one and best.
Thy sons will cease to love thee
And for thy sake to toil
When clinging shamrock ceases
To love the Irish soil.

II

WIFE AND WEAN

It was in Scotland that Pat met the lassie who was to become his wife. Buying and selling farm produce in his enterprising fashion, he made in his early days very frequent journeys to the sister country, and on one of these, at Dumfries on a fair day, he met his fate. A shopkeeper who knew Pat effected an introduction, and so well did the young Antrim man make use of his opportunities on this and the following visit that the girl gave him permission to speak to her parents. The application was not favourably received. Probably a consent would have been given soon had it been question only of satisfying father and mother. But the greatest opposition came not from a relative but from the friend of the family, in this case a stout old lady whose litany contained a petition for preservation from Irishmen and foreigners. "Nasty ill-speakin' folk," she said, "goin' aboot shootin' people"—if she had a daughter she would never let her marry an Irishman. At an arranged interview Pat endeavoured to mollify the crusty old Scotchwoman by pointing out that most of the glen folk came from Scotland ages ago; that the Plantation and persecutions brought others, and that Antrim folk were nearer to her by blood than many on her side of the water. It was of no use; the old lady could not be reasoned out of her antipathy to Irishmen. She could not away with what she called their "bad tongues" and their murderous propensities, and when Pat asked her to believe that not every

countryman answered to her conception she ended the conference with the remark, "Ye're a' tarr'd wi' the same stick."

In the end the constancy of the young couple softened the hearts of the elders who had a right to speak, and the marriage took place. It meant a break with the old lady tyrant (she relented not), but the decision was never regretted by the girl's parents, one of whom still survives. The union has been productive of a happiness and content rare even among what are called happy marriages. Mrs. M'Carty has a strong objection to the appearance in print of any statements about her, but this much may be said in defiance of her wishes, that she has retained the girlish good looks that attracted the lover of fifteen years ago. Of the bairn it is permitted to speak, and she is certainly a peculiar child.

During the early days of their married life, Pat and his wife did what is common, perhaps, to nearly all of their age and condition. They thought a great deal of the possible new life to come to them, and the form it might take. Inclination settled that it was to be a girl—needless to say, a bonnie child, and a good one. She was to be called Phyllis, partly because the mother to be had read a story in which the heroine, a very sweet and gracious girl, bore that name, and partly because it sounded so well with M'Carty. And as the pair talked half-seriously, half-jokingly of all they would like the loved one to be and become, there was evolved the ideal of a gay, lovable little being, full of wit and wisdom, representing the parents' conceptions of all that is beautiful and good in child form. A little room, with broad, low window, overlooking the garden, was to be "the bairn's room when she's auld enough," and the expectant mother's hands wrought for many days at cot and window draperies and the useless useful things that women love, to make beautiful the room for yet unopened eyes. Outside,

by the window, Pat planted a blush rose and a honeysuckle "to look in on her," and here, too, he laid out and planted with pinks, primroses, lavender, and all sweet-smelling things, a garden in the garden—a tiny plot, with miniature boxwood-bordered paths, forming circles, crescents, and angles such as could be tended by tiny hands. In those days a father in imagination led to the fields a little child, who chased butterflies and filled dimpled hands with posies of short-stemmed flowers, while she waited for a ride home on one of the horses, or he walked with her by the rushing waters in the deep dark glens, and shared his plant-lore with a wise little listener. And a mother saw dolls dressed, heard the patter of little feet through the house, and nightly kissed little drowsy eyes asleep in the cot she had prepared. So did these two imaginative persons, while busy and happy in their daily work, dream of greater happiness to come, and speak and act almost as if their daughter had arrived.

But she never came. And when those who had talked of her, and planned for her, realised that she was not coming, the child of their imaginings was too dear to be given up. Novelists have had real tears in their eyes for the sufferings of their created children, and little Phyllis M'Carty was more real to these country folk than any novelist's creation. If it was denied to their eyes to see and their arms to enfold their child, they had this satisfaction, that she kept her first innocence and beauty, sickness or evil could not harm her, death could not take her away. So she kept and keeps her place in their lives—the garden planned for her is hers, and the first flowers of the honeysuckle and the rose that look in at the window are always placed in "the bairn's room." For her the mother sings songs as she goes about her work, and imagines "situations" in which the bonnie little daughter appears. For her the father has written what he calls "a deal o' nonsense." And this is some of it.

THE ANGEL O' THE HOOSE

Did you ever see a cherub,
Father! Ever—ever see
A bonnie white wee angel
Aboot the size o' me?

I think I did, my dearie,
Yes—once I caught a sight
O' somethin' like a cherub,
And just aboot your height.

O! really! father—really!
Tell me—what did you see?
Was it fleein' doon frae heaven?
Was it roostin' on a tree?

Na, dear—'twas in the garden
I saw the angel stand
Beside the white moss rose-bush,
A white rose in its hand.

O father!—that's my rose-bush,
The one you gave to me;
I'm glad the little angel
Stood where I love to be.
And did ye hear it singin'
The sang an angel sings?
And did ye see its golden croon?
And did ye see its wings?

What sangs are sung by angels,
My dear, I canna tell;
It may be that the wee one
Sang saftly to itsel'.

I saw nae wings behind it,
The face was turnit roon,
But I am sure and certain
I saw a golden croon.

What did ye do then, father?
Did you creep very near,
And stretch your hand out gently
To catch the bonnie dear?

I look'd up just a minute,
But in that minute sma'
It must ha' left the rose-bush,
I look'd—it was awa'.

O father, what a peety!
Ye might ha' seen it flee
Awa' up into heaven
If ye had watch'd a wee.

God bless the bairn—my cherub,
And spare her lang to me,
That fleein' up to heaven
I do not want to see.

THE FEARSOMEST BEASTS

A wee bit o' nonsense to mak' the bairn sleep.

O FEYTHER, dear, I canna sleep,
Sit here beside my bed,
And talk to me a wee, wee bit,
Aboot things ye hae read.

O' a' the strange and fearsome beasts
That mak' puir bodies flee,
What would ye ca' the very warst
That's possible to be?

It's true, my dear, there's awfu' beasts
Ye'll never see, I pray,
But which are just the very warst
Is difficult to say.
If I was press'd to gie them names,
I'd ca' the warst, I think,
The Jim-jak and the Wiggle-flop,
The Fardy and the Squink.

And what's the Jim-jak like, dear dad?
Weel, dear—it's just—ye see—
It looks—that is—it's shapit like—
I mean—appears to be—
A sort o'—kind o' cur'ous beast
That isn't often seen;
Ye'll ken the better what it's like
If ye will shut your een.

Weel, tell me o' the Wiggle-flop;
I've shut my een tight—tight.
That's guid, my lammie, keep them shut,
Don't open them to-night.
The Wiggle-flop's, I'm sure, as high
As, weel—maist anything;
And as for length—it's fu' as lang
As is a piece o' string.

The Fardy, feyther. Yes, my dear,
Just keep your een tight clos'd,
It's just the maist amazin' beast
That ever wak'd or doz'd.

At ev'ry corner there's a leg,
  At one end is a tail,
And at the ither end a mooth—
  In that it's like a whale.

And what? Now, darlin', dinna move,
  And dinna even think—
And I'll proceed to tell you o'
  That ither beast, the Squink.
It is, ye see—I see a gape,
  John Nod is comin' fast,
The Squink, ye see—God bless the bairn,
  She's off to sleep at last.

THE LAND O' NAE SURPRISE

When bairns on pillows lay their heids,
  And shut their peepin' eyes,
A bonnie angel taks them off
  To land o' Nae Surprise.
It is a land o' mysteries,
  O' wonders great and sma',
If I should leeve a hunder years,
  I couldna tell them a'.

Far stranger things will happen there
  Than ever man devis'd,
And what surprises ye the maist
  Is that ye're no' surpris'd.
A wee lang-leggit beggar-lass
  Will turn into a queen,
And when ye think she's fat as fat,
  She'll grow as lean as lean.

A cabbage there may be a rose,
A rosebud cabbage size;
There's great onsartinty wi' things
In land o' Nae Surprise.
Nae word is just exackly sure
O' what it ocht to mean,
And red's no' sartain sure it's red
But thinks it's maybe green.

Ye're speakin' to a leddy fine,
And, sudden, then and there
She changes to an elephant
And flees up thro' the air.
Then while ye watch the elephant,
And think he flaps right well,
Ye find ye hae got wings to flap
And flee awa' yersel'.

And when it's near to breakfast-time
A funny beastie comes
And brings the bairnies back to land
O' copybooks and sums.
They ca' the beast the Brattle-Pig,
And when it makes a noise,
Sma' folk are back at hame in bed;
Just sleepy girls and boys.

DID YOU EVER?

Did you ever see the sun
When his day's wark's nearly done,
Wi' his hand stuck in his pocket
And his heid to one side cockit,
Smilin' beams o' golden light
While he's waitin' for the night?

Did you ever see the sea
Take it easy-like a wee
Wi' the gulls aboon her cryin',
And she at fu' length lyin'
On her bed o' broon seaweed
Wi' her hands beneath her heid?

Did you ever see the moon
On a winter afternoon
Mak' a lookin'-glass o' water;
See the mirror quickly shatter
As it lay before your sight
Into bits o' silver light?

Did you ever hear the trees
Talk in whispers to the breeze
O' the Spring and Summer glories;
Laughin' at the funny stories,
That sae cunnin'ly he weaves,
Till their laughter shakes the leaves?

Did you ever see the stars
Ridin' roon the sky on cars
Made o' clouds and mists and vapours,
Winkin', shootin', cuttin' capers,
Playin' hide-and-seek bo-peep,
When the moon is fast asleep?

Never saw sic things, ye said,
Why, wherever were ye bred?
Dootless in some toonship smoky
Whaur the air is thick and choky,

Whaur they hae nae sun nor moon,
Nor a breeze to play a tune,
Or to tell a funny story;
Whaur the water's mirror'd glory,
Sleepin' sea and starry blue,
Are for ever hid frae view.
Och, I peety ye—I do.

III

VISITORS

With the first primrose of the Spring comes the earlier members of a band of yearly visitors to the glens. These are the men who lovingly measure and describe the gaunt remains of early Christian churches, and annually test the deflection of their tottering walls, who burrow in souterrains, "squeeze" stones for oghams, and pass the mud of a crannog through their fingers in the hope of finding a bit of old pottery, or the bone needle that stitched a fur tunic of prehistoric man. They are the men who are the despair of their wives by reason of the trash they bring home, in the form of rotten wood, which *may* have been part of the fur-clad man's canoe, flint flakes, celts, and stone hammers, fragments of cinerary urns, and the bones and shells from the kitchen middens of the old inhabitants. They are the botanists who know where *Adiantum Capillus-Veneris* grows wild and won't tell you, whose coat pockets bulge out with anæmic docks and nettles, which they will take home and plant and tend lovingly in the hope that they may prove to be hitherto unnamed varieties. They are the men who have a searching eye for grandfathers' clocks, oak linen-chests, old iron sconces, and bits of Waterford cut glass. They are the men whose pipes go out as they pass a cottage in the hills, making it needful to go in and beg a bit of live peat to light them again, or who want a drink of butter-milk or water and the opportunity to talk with the deaf old woman by the fire

about the banshees, the fairies, the old songs, stories, beliefs, and all that goes by the name of folk-lore. Some of them have paints and brushes and paper or canvas, some have cameras, and some have nothing at all but a great love in their hearts for the land and the people, a delight in the touch of the heather or grass and the sight of the hills and sea. Most of them know Pat and have found a welcome in his home, and with some of them he has dealt humorously as in the rhymes which follow.

THE ARTIST

His claes were thin and shabby when first he reached this pairt,
Wi' box o' pents and brushes and a big sowl fu' o' Airt.

His purse was thin and hungry wi' a leanness sair to see;
Its twa sides clapp'd thegither just as lean as lean could be.

He pented land and seascapes and he didna pent them ill,
And tuk leeberties wi' Nature for to mak' them finer still.

He pented a' his simmer skies a double extry blue,
Nae Antrim sky since Adam leev'd had ever sic a hue.

He acted very leeberal to mountains as to height,
And gied them a' a thoosan' feet aboon their size by right.

And whaur the coast had naethin' hard to meet the billows' shocks,
He thocht it only fair to pent a wheen o' craggy rocks.

A lake or twa he would insart to change the country's face,
And trees in twas and threes and groves he dabb'd a' ow'r the place.

He even in his picters wad the times and saisons change,
Had new-born lambs at harvest time—a thing we thocht was strange.

"Imagination, aye," he said, "should guide the penter's hand,"
And that, of coorse, explain'd the things we didna understand.

He wark'd wi' mortial industry and few divarteesements,
The wal * was hard put to to find the water for his pents.

And, week by week, he bundled aff to London picter men
His landscapes and his seascapes and his studies o' the glen.

But still the puir wee purse was lean, its twa sides did adhere,
Its stomach hadna shelter'd goold for nigh upon a year.

In sheer despair anither sketch, his biggest yet, he tried,—
A sheet o' three feet lang or mair and maybe twa feet wide.

A maisterpiece it was to be o' airtist's brain and hand,
He show'd the distant Scottish shore and miles o' sea and land.

He put in a' that for these pairts Dame Nature had decreed,
And things she hadna thocht o' he invented frae his heid.

He made a reef o' wicked rocks rin right acrass the bay,
He used his verra deepest blue to reprisint the say.

Behind big Billy Shepherd's hoose he made a mountain be,
And planted his bog-medda wi' a cur'ous kind o' tree.

* Well.

He shifted objecks till he found their maist effective spot,
And in the foremost foregrun' plac'd auld Peggy Martin's cot.

Auld Peggy was a widdy wife wi' temper and a tongue
That talk'd three husbands to their graves while yet a woman young.

Her hoose was puir and Airt is Airt, but still I must admit
He took ow'r mony leeberties the day he pented it.

He made the wa's a' tumble-doon and slimy green and foul,
And took the chimney aff the hoose to plase his airtist sowl.

It wadna weel agree wi' that to hae it waterproof,
Sae holes in great variety he dotted ow'r the roof.

The windys a' were stuff'd wi' rags to make them harmoneeze,
And just inside the kitchen daur a braw pig stood at ease.

The midden that behind the byre was found in Peggy's case,
He pented right forninst the door in a convanient place.

The picter finished to his taste the puir consaited wretch
Invited Peg, then passin' near, to come and see the sketch.

She cam' wi' smiles, her can o' suds she sat doon by the way
And apron-wip'd her airms a bit, for it was weshin' day.

She look'd, she grunted, grunted mair—the smilin' face was gone;
It didna need a seer to see a storm was comin' on.

"And wha's pig-stye is that?" quo' she, "wha's pig-stye may it be,
Is that my hoose? noo answer that, just answer straight to me."

He tried to soothe the angry wife, and show'd that tratement free
O' subjeck was the airtist's right, as plain as plain could be.

"Deil tak' ye and yer subjeck and the tratement ye ca' free,
It's the tratement o' the widdy that I'm thinkin' o'," quo' she.

"I've slaved till I can hardly stand on my twa blissid feet
To hae the place look dacent like in that there pented sheet.

"I whitewesh'd a' the wa's mysel', I did them yesterday,
I wesh'd the windys weel wi' soap and swep' the yerd o' strae.

"And *that's* my thanks, my gintleman, and that's the way ye trate
A puir lone widdy that has got to arn her bit o' mate.

"Ye winna hae the pleesure, tho', to send abroad yer cheat,"
Wi' that she dash'd her dirty suds right ow'r the pented sheet.

"Ye ca' it wather-colour wark, I ca' it trash instead,
But wather-colour it will be in arnest noo," she said.

Then aff she stepp'd, her angry voice still growlin' oot her ills,
Like thunder sweerin' to itsel' awa' amang the hills.

The puir wee penter man sat doon and cudna help but weep
While frae the sheet the dirty suds went dhreepin' dhreep-a-dhreep.

And yin side o' the hungry purse said to the ither then,
"It's plain to me there'll naethin' come 'twixt you and me again."

The penter's een still weepin' sair fell on his pictur wet,
He thocht it didna look sae bad and might be savit yet.

The suds that wesh'd some pent awa' had blended what remained
To gie result the penter's skill could never hae attained.

The pictur, then, wi' doots and fears its journey did perform
To London toon and lo, behold, it took the place by storm.

It fairly took the breath awa' frae the suparior pow'rs,
And big folk cam' in carriages to look at it for hours.

"Hoo beautiful! hoo eggswhiskit!" the leddies a' exclaimed,
And thro' their spy-glesses obsarv'd what penter hadn't dhramed.

"Sic pearly greys!" the critics said, "sic atmosphere! sic tone!
It's shair the finest piece o' wark the century has shown."

The pictur papers a' prodooced the penter's potograph,
And a' the larn'd societies elected him straight aff.

The king that rules these kingdoms three and nane may disobey
Commanded him, on penalty, to dine wi' him next day.

The puir wee purse sae hungry yince, wi' clingin' sides sae lean,
Is noo aboot the fattest purse that ever met yer een.

And noo the penter drives his coach and gangs in stylish duds
(He doesn't tell the people, tho', o' Peggy and the suds).

THE ANTIQUARY

When days begin to lengthen oot
At seed-time o' the year,
A wee bald-heided cratur, stoot,
Wi' glesses on, comes here.
It's sic a sure and sartin fack
That lengthenin' days will bring
Our frien', the antiquary back,
He's ca'd "the Sign o' Spring."
He'll scart * auld tombstanes by the 'oor
To find some name or date,
His face a' blacken'd by the stour,†—
What cares he?—deil a haet.
He revels in blue-mowlded things
That mickle need a wash,
Auld rusty buckles, bolts, and rings,
That common folk ca' trash.
For twa-three fossils frae a rock
He'll walk ten mile or mair;
H'd gie his heid for some auld crock
O' prehistoric ware.
The bits o' trumpery he brings
Up by to let me see
Are juist the maist rediklus things
That's possible to be.
He's got the veritable tail
O' Queen Matilda's sark,

* Scratch. † Dirt, dust.

The jug that used to haud the ale
That Shakspere drank at wark;
He's got the tawse King David used
To scalp unruly weans,
And twa pair breeches, much abus'd,
That cloth'd his nether banes;
The circlet o' Queen Mary's waist
(A dirty-lookin' dud),
The tail hairs o' an anshent baste
That leev'd before the flood.
A' these and muckle mair I've seen—
Things brocht frae every airt;
Let but the thing be auld, my frien'
Will tak' it to his hairt.

I mind me o' the day when first
I met him wi' his load;
The horse had stopp'd to quench his thirst
As he cam' doon the road.
He emptied oot his bag o' stanes
On paper on his knees,
And show'd me some wi' herrin'-banes
And some wi' marks like trees.
"Are ony ammonites," quo' he,
"In these pairts roondaboot?"
I thocht he pokit fun at me
And answered straight: "Nae doot
There's lots o' them—they're common sights,
Ye'll fin' them here in wheens,*
And Jebusites and Moabites
And sometimes Philistines."
I had nae lear o' fossils then,
Nor ever had a squint

* Lots, quantities.

At tools o' prehistoric men,
Or workit flake o' flint.
But ere he left I thocht I knew
A guid deal o' the trade,
And thocht I understandit hoo
A trifle micht be made.
He read me frae his catalogues
The price o' flints and stanes,
The horns o' animals frae bogs,
Auld skulls, and bits o' banes.
It seemit strange that folk should buy
Sic ugly, useless trash,
But if they wantit it—why, I
Wad find it them—for cash.

Next morn I started to colleck,
And drew a load o' flint;
I had, as near's I recolleck,
Five thoosan' pieces in't.
I valued them at twopence each,
'Twas naethin' to the price
That larn'd professor folk wha teach
Wad fork out in a trice.
I fun' twa useless kitchen crooks,
A braukin three-legg'd pot,
Some rusty spades and reapin' hooks,
And for the anshent lot
I fixed a guinea to be paid—
Sae moderate was I;
Auld airn work my frien' had said
Museum folk wad buy.
I minded me my feyther's dog,
He had when we were weans,
Was deid and berrit in the bog—
I diggit up the banes.

I pric'd the skull at one pun' ten,
Leg banes ten shillin' each;
No' willin' that the teacher men
Should fin' them oot o' reach.
The shafts o' an auld rotten cairt
And keel o' fishin' boat,
I thocht, self-interest apairt,
Were worth a five-pun' note.

My treasures a' by Monday night
Were rangit in a row,
They seemed to my unlearnit sight
To mak' a guidly show.
The chairge, too, seemed a proper fee,
But, by the Tuesday morn,
I thocht if but advanced a wee
'Twould buy a field o' corn.
On Wednesday I thocht the price
Was still a bit too low;
It should, at varra laste, be twice
As much—I made it so.
Thinks I at that I'll let it be,
From addin' mair refrain;
By Friday afternoon at three
I raised the price again.
I thocht wi' guid museum stuff
Anither rise nae hairm;
By Saturday I had enough
To buy a dacent fairm.

And then my thochts went far afield,
And saw a bright career;
If yin sma' week a' that can yield,
What winna dae a year?

Ye ken hoo thocht desires will breed
And hoo desires expand;
A farm nae langer satisfeed,
I bocht the haill toon-land.
And noo a person o' estate
Wi' lands let oot on lease,
I saw mysel' a magistrate,
A justice o' the peace.
Sae verra near and sure it seem'd,
My bosom heav'd wi' pride;
I leeved respeckit and esteem'd
By a' the country side.

Next week my frien' a veesit paid,
We clamber'd straight abaft
To whaur my precious stock in trade
Was rangit in the laft.
I show'd wi' ill-concealit glee
The objecks o' my quest,
He look'd at them—he look'd at me,—
I needna tell the rest.

THE BOTANIST

He had a silver-heided cane,
And tappit gintly, tapp'd again—
He seekit shelter frae the rain.

Weel dress'd was he frae croon to heel,
An unco stylish, spic and span,—
A maist oncommon nice young man,
And look'd as if he kenn'd it weel.

The face at first sicht lookit smairt,
Baith cheeks and chin were shavit bare
And groomit wi' extremest care,
The bit moustache—a thing o' airt.
The nose was straight,—the een were broon,
Sae far a' richt—but yince aboon
There seemit somethin' wantin' there.
I thocht wi' a' his clever air
The forehead started ower soon
To join the weel pomaded hair.
We said to him "Mak' nae excuse,
We bid ye welcome to the hoose."
He doff'd his hat wi' lordly air,
And tuk wi' grace the proffer'd chair.
"I hear ye're fond o' flow'rs," quo' he.
"Wha tell't ye that has tell't nae lee,"
Said I, "I ken their ways a wee,
But dinna study them frae books,
'Tis frae theirsels I learn their looks."
"*I* study books," quo' he, wi' pride,
"A botanist am I.
We micht, noo that it's clear again,
Gang botaneesin' doon the lane
If ye consent to be my guide."
"Wi' pleasure," I reply.

I found oot early in the walk
He'd plenty o' that fluent talk
That wi' sma' sense agrees;
And as we trampit ow'r the fields
Discoorsin' o' what Nature yields
In way o' plants and trees
His weel-parfumit hankerchay
Was like the coast o' Araby,
It scented a' the breeze.

A langer talk made me to ken
My brawly titivated fren'
Was mair consarn'd wi' Latin names
Than wi' the beauties o' the plants,
Their form and character and wants,
And places whaur they mak' their hames.
I thocht I'd bother him a bit,
And yet nae mortal sin commit.

I show'd him first my primrose beds,
My lilacs, yellows, whites, and reds,
My auld deep crimsons, china blue,
And ev'ry ither kind and hue.
Doubles and singles, hose-in-hose,
The kind whaur leaves the flow'rs enclose,
"Jack-i'-the-green" we ca' it here—
The fruit o' quests for many a year.
And as he look'd I heard him say
"Order—Prim—you—lass—see—aye."
"Prim lass," quo' I, "wha's she, my fren'?
We've sonsy lassies in the glen,
But dinna ca' them prim, I beg;
They're just as guid as guid can be,
And neither prim nor ower free,—
A wee bit stumpy i' the leg—
But that's nae great defeck.
A human bodie's like a tree
A wee bit stunted near the sea,
It's what ye wad expeck.
If so be that ye want a wife
Ye can't gang wrang—I ken them a',
Modest and guid, I'll stake my life,
But prim!—na—God be thankit—na."

He pu'd a cuckoo sourleek next,
'Oxalis' gie'd the needed text.

"I'm glad," said I, "to hear ye say
Ax Alice—glad am I this day.
O' coorse ye mean wee Alice Carr,
I tell ye man ye micht do waur;
The tither Alice up the hill,
Whase feyther keeps the scutchin' mill,
Wad be ow'r auld for you I think;
And if ye're pausin' on the brink
O' matrimony, tak advise
Frae ane reputed to be wise,
And as ye love a peacefu' life
Seek even temper in your wife.
Nae maitter what her warldly gear,
A sulky girnin' wife is dear.
A woman grievin' for hersel'
Will mak' your hame a parfit hell;—
But Alice Carr—the maid's a' right,
I ken her sin' she was that height,
She'll *keep* ye aye a happy man—
I wish ye joy—here, tak' my han."

A talk o' Polypody fern
Came handy here—ses I, "Puir bairn,
Polly—the bodie—might I speir *
If she's some lassie, leevin' near,
Wha has, or thinks she has, a claim
On luve frae you and future hame;
Some one ye thocht was sweet until
Ye found anither sweeter still?
If that is sae—gang—tell the truth
In manly way by word o' mooth;
But if she leeves ow'r far awa'
For you to pay a friendly ca',

* Ask.

A nice bit letter, true and kind,
Will tell her o' your change o' mind;
Ye'll then hae naethin' to lament,
And wi' puir Polly's free consent
Ye'll drink a fu' unpoison'd chalice
O' luve wi' that wee lassie Alice."

That knock'd him ower, so to spake,
'Twas some time ere he silence brake;
He twirl'd the silver-heided stick,
Just what to say he didna ken.
I think it must hae struck him then
He'd fa'en in wi' a lunatick,
And wi' the air o' one that frames
Reproof that winna sair offend,
"I wad hae thocht," quo' he, "ye kenn'd
At laste the common Latin names."

"Dear boy," I said, "I ken them weel
And hoo they cam' to be.
Ere Eve oor mither met the deil
And touch'd the aipple tree,
'Twas Adam's task ae simmer day
To name the beasts and birds,
The fish that prowl aboot the seas,
The fleein' insecks, plants and trees,
Wi' fit appropret words.
And I maun say he did it weel
Wi' maist oncommon care and skeel
Up to a sartin pint,
Wi' wisdom wonderfu' and taste
The image o' the bird or baste
Is in the word enshrin't.

Let's for example tak' the soo,*
Noo disna that word bring to view
A gret big, ugly, gruntlin' baste
Wi' nae refeenment—not the laste?
And sarpint to yer mind will bring
A lang, sly, slimy, creepy thing,
The word's enough to mak' ye yell.
And in the case o' chimpanzee
Why, man, it awmost mak's ye *SEE*
The leevin' image o' yersel'.

"Then look at hippopotamus,—
The baste's a mountain—sae's the word;
Sae on wi' animal or bird
That got its name before the fuss
And botheration turn'd his heid;
A' commentators are agreed
The nomenclature's o' the best;
The names wi' which the things are drest
Descriptive and appropriate.
But when the 'oor was gettin' late
Puir Adam didna dae sae weel;
I ken just richtly hoo he'd feel
Confoozled wi' the scraighs † o' whales
Dragg'd ow'r the gravel by their tails,
And fluster'd at the cur'ous shapes
O' bastes he never saw before.
Imagine a' the fierce uproar
O' hippopotamuses, apes,
Constructor-sarpints, conger eels,
A' wrigglin' like sae mony deils,—
Them jumpin'-jacks the kangaroos
Deev'd ‡ wi' the squawks o' cockatoos

* Sow. † Screeches—the *gh* guttural. ‡ Deafened.

Far frae accustom'd hames
Nae doot wi' empty wames.*
It's no' to wonder at, indeed,
The puir man nearly lost his heid.

"The first sign o' his failin' pow'rs
Was gie'en Christian names to flow'rs.
A wee thing that he surnam'd Thus,
A cousin o' the primrose clan,
He had her christen'd Polly Ann!
'Twas parfitly ridiculous.
Amy Rillis, Amy Ranthus,
Ann Emony, and Alice Sum,
'Twas plainly frae a brain-box numb
Came titles sae anomalous.
The man was sleepin' on his feet.
Indeed I think it wasna reet
To gang on warkin' after dark,
And he sae weary o' the wark,
When naethin' rested to be nâm'd
But plants nae bigger than a flea,
Wee scradions † ye could hardly see;
The puir man shouldna' then be blam'd
That 'stead o' dacent fillin' words
Inventit for the bastes and birds
He reel'd aff lang unmeanin' screeds,
Big lang syllabic centipedes,—
The sma'er plant the bigger word,
Skedaddlin' ow'r the alphabet
To mak' some fearsome epithet
The scribe had bother to record,
His only light the moon.

* Stomachs.

† Irish *scraidin*—anything contemptibly undersized. The word is generally applied in Ulster to potatoes, apples, plants, &c.

And when the angel made complent
Nae ears sic rigmaroles could seize,
And names sae lang and coorse as these
Wad look ridiculous in prent,
Puir Adam frae the land o' drames
Just murmur'd, 'Them's the Latin names,
Ye'd better write them doon.'"

That tuk the botanist aback,
He look'd as if he'd like to say
He thocht puir o' my intelleck—
We shakit hands, and said "Good day."

THE LADY FRAE LONDON

Frae far-aff Babylon o' modern days
She came, a veesitor, to Antrim glens,
Seekin' to larn a leetle o' the ways
O' savage Irish in their native dens.
She had a movin' tale of flood to tell,
Had cross'd a sea she ne'er had cross'd before,
Had seen its great green billows heave and swell
And break wi' thunder on the Antrim shore.
She shudder'd as she thocht o' that deep sea,
And what she ca'd "its wild unceasin' strife,"
And wonder'd at her ain great braverie
That trusted to its breest her precious life,
The puir wee thing.
I thocht o' fishers tost
Thro' lang wild nichts in cockle-shells o' boats,—
Winds howlin' like the spirits o' the lost,—
Sea gapin' for them wi' a hundred throats,

And her—in steamer like a palace borne,
Stranraer to Larne, a run o' thirty mile,
Twa 'oors at sea, a pleasant simmer morn,
A sofa'd cabin—weel, it made me smile.
But wha could blame wi' sic' bewitchin' ways?
She lookit like a posy in the room,
And parfume floated frae her rustlin' claes
As frae a garden fu' o' pinks in bloom.
That she was bother'd I could plainly see,
Movin' a bit onaisy in her seat,
And kiltin' o' her petticoats a wee,
I thocht it micht be done to show her feet,
The fine clock'd stockin's and the dainty shoon
Sae sma' and polished to the ninety-nines,*
But what for did she keek † sae roon' and roon'
And show o' fear and narvousness the signs?
Oot cam' the trouble o' the dame at last—
"The pig," she stammer'd, "is he in and loose?"
I wish ye'd seen my wife—she stood aghast—
A pig gilravagin' in her clean hoose!!
"He's oot the morn," said I, "to pay the rint,
And he'll be terr'ble sorry that ye came
And found him oot, and gin he'd had a hint
That ye were comin' he'd 'a stay'd at hame."
"Noo dinna laugh at me altho' I fear
To meet the pig," quo' she. "We London folk
Hae heard frae childhood 'tis the custom here
To live wi' pigs—I see noo it's a joke;
But tell me noo aboot the children dear,
Are they intelligent, and are they good?
And hoo dae lovin' mithers treat them here
In case o' naughtiness, or if they're rude?"
"Weel, ma'am," said I, "they scalp them in sic case."

* To the point of perfection. † Look.

"Oh, horrible!" cried she, "but Mister Pat
Ye canna say and look me in the face
Your Ulster mithers wad dae ocht like that."
I felt a wee bit bother'd to explain,
And tried this way the sense to her to bring.
"It's no red Indian scalpin' that I mane;
The Ulster custom is anither thing."
A strikin' airgument by mithers us'd
When bairns their stock o' patience sair hae tried,
It gangs to fundamentals wi' th' accus'd."
"I like to hear that noo," the lady cried,
"Hoo pleasant to avoid a' noise and heat.
In this you Irish can the English teach
Wi' gintle airguments the case you treat,
And straight the bottom o' the subjeck reach."
"Not gintle, ma'am," I said, "as ye conceive,
They aft surprise the 'subjeck' wi' their whiz,
And as for heat and noise, ma'am, I believe
They maun be prisint whaur concussion is."
She didna doot the scientific fact,
But said, half-smilin', as he fixed her hat,
As one wha, gintly, error wad correct,
"Ye meant to say *dis*cussion, Master Pat."

IV

CHARACTERS

EVERY country-side has its "characters." To *be* a character is to have knobs, mannerisms, or peculiarities which differentiate the person so styled from the normal member of society. The common occupation in the glen country—farming—is not fertile in the production of human eccentricities. The "character" must be looked for among the roamers, the persons who have duties to perform over a large field, or among those who, by virtue of attainments or office, exercise in any degree authority or over-lordship. In the first class are the travelling tinker, the tailor, the pedlar, the cow-doctor, the clockmaker; in the second, the priest or minister, the justice of the peace, the postmaster, and the schoolmaster. In the eyes of the simple and unlearned any one of these is, nearly always, a "character," or what is much the same thing, "a bit of an oddity." Be it noted that it is only the pleasantly erratic who is a character. He is not one who is distinguished by bad temper, such a one is simply "a cross bit o' goods." To abstain from washing and to get drunk only make a man in the tongue of the people "a dirty baste" or "a drunken scut." Laziness will not qualify, a "managin' wife" is no character in the glen sense, nor is the "ould miser." Incidentally it may be stated that a miser in Antrim is always an "ould miser." The diseased love for accumulation is so associated with old age that the common mind cannot conceive of the two apart,

and therefore applies the adjective when and where it finds occasion to use the noun.

A man who is not quite a "character" may be "a quare character." The distinction is nice, and not to be understood easily by the stranger. The qualification expresses doubt as to the subject's right to full honours, it connotes a lower and poorer quality of eccentricity. The full blood is the man with the white hat, the man who gets drunk twice a week and thinks it wrong to be absent from church, who goes to law for twopence and gives the beggar a sovereign, who dresses like a ploughman when he has more wealth than he can use. The "quare character" may be nothing more than a vegetarian, or a man who sleeps with his window open in a country where the night air is considered injurious. To be a "bad character" is simply to have a bad character in the dictionary meaning of the words.

Along with the "characters" every country-side has its fool. The word is used in the singular, because, no matter how many of weak mind there may be in a district, there is usually but one qualified to be the fool of the community. The public fool is male, physically strong and harmless. Therefore he can travel, and so does not become too much of a burden to a few. He can do fetching and carrying, and render such services as do not require average intelligence; he is able, therefore, to make a return, however inadequate, for his support, and even the generous like a *quid pro quo*. He is not called fool, the word is pitiless, used only in contempt or anger, and of those about whose sanity there is no question. He may be called "the fool man," which is equivalent to "poor fool man" and sympathetic, the words hold pity for the afflicted. But even this is generally considered too strong.

Ian Maclaren, in one of the most amusing of his sketches, alludes to the reluctance of Drumtochty folk to use a strong or harsh word as descriptive of a neighbour under the influence

of drink. They had a dozen euphemistic expressions, applicable to various degrees of inebriety: "He had had his mornin';" "Ye cud see he had been tastin';" but "intoxicated! Losh me, hoo cud ony richt-thinkin' man sweer tae sic an awfu' word."

A somewhat similar reserve characterises the Antrim man who speaks of the mentally afflicted. North-country terminology of insanity is rich in such expressive words and phrases as "cracked," "daft," "no richt wise," "no a' there," "aff his heid," "saft," "wants a slate," "touched," "a wee bit aff," &c. &c. Some of these appear in Pat's humorous examination of the life and actions of Jamie Hunter, for proof or disproof of insanity. Jamie Hunter was a real personage, and the rhyme does not exaggerate his powers as a trencher-man. He travelled from farm to farm over a wide area, performing such easy tasks as Pat describes, and receiving in return a good meal. The youngsters of the house were accustomed to place in his hands a newspaper upside down, and Jamie would amuse them by reeling off a long story, into which were introduced the names of the listeners, or of people well known to them, who were represented as figuring in a police-court for drunkenness or disorderly conduct, the composition evincing, at least some, mental capacity. On Easter Sunday morning Jamie used to turn up at a certain farmhouse and take his breakfast, which included six eggs. Among the children he was supposed to take as much at the next farm, and, indeed, to keep on taking breakfasts until dinner-time arrived, when a series of dinners was commenced. Stout, unwashed, comfortably clad, and well fed, with no work harder than that described by the rhymer, Jamie's life was a more enviable one than that of the ploughman or farm-labourer, and it can well be imagined that some of these, when they saw him sauntering over the country with a letter from the post-office, or sunning himself on the dyke-side, with a short black pipe in his mouth, would ask themselves

the questions, which Pat has tried to settle, "Is he lazy? Is he daft?"

In the farming class, more than in any other, perhaps, there is a temptation to the wife to act the part of Mrs. M'Bride. A man's occupation generally takes him from home—in farming the home is the business centre. The wife takes her share in the work of bread-winning, she is equal working partner, and if she has the love to rule she will seek to be the predominant one. When the subject was discussed one evening in Pat's kitchen there was present one Peter M'Murray, who has had with his wife many a struggle for supremacy. When the last speaker had considered the joys and crosses of married life, and struck a balance in favour of the married man's happiness, Peter delivered himself of his opinion, and gave his experience in these words—

"He p'ys for it, he p'ys for it, he has a deal to put up wi'."

JAMIE HUNTER

We youngsters used to say at school,
"Jamie's juist a wee bit aff,
Jamie's no' a muckle fool;"
Jamie hearin' us would laugh.
Is he, I would like to ken,
Wise, or foolishest o' men?

The pleughman's up at break o' day,
Scolded if he rises late;
Jamie, snoozin' in the hay,
Rises when he thinks it's eight.
Where he sleeps, gets meat and drink:
That looks wise enough I think.

The pleughman to his maister's tied,
Dursna ca' an 'oor his ain;
Jamie roams the country-side,
Lord or maister owns he nane.
Dootless that looks very saft,
Still I wadna ca' it daft.

Breakfast over, out he goes,
Shifts his quarters doon the glen;
Helps some lass to wring the clothes,
Carries peat till after ten;
Payment tak's in breed and cheese,
Nae great signs o' folly these.

He slips awa' across the bog,
Watches Davie shootin' snipe;
Tak's a run wi' Davie's dog,
Tak's a pu' at Davie's pipe.
This may very lazy be,
That it's daft I canna see.

Eleven is a hungry oor,
Broth's noo ploutin' * on the fire;
For some he'll sweep the kitchen flure
(The lab'rer's worthy o' his hire).
Wise men wad be naethin' loth
To earn sae easily their broth.

By twal' he's at anither hoose;
Carries somethin' to the pigs;
Eats a wing and leg o' goose,
Praties frae twa garden rigs.
Folk may say he wants a slate—
He never wants a weel-filled plate.

* Boiling, with splashing noise.

At twa, he ca's wi' Mistress Broon,
  There, to plase her laughin' weans,
Reads the paper upside doon,
  Breed and butter for his pains.
    Fun wi' weans is aisy wark,
    It disna wet wi' sweat the sark.

A letter frae the post he'll bring,
  Tak', at five, his cup o' tay;
Tay is no' a heavy thing—
  Jamie has it thrice a day;
    Folk o' wit may hae a stock
    And like their tay at five o'clock.

The pleughman sups at close o' day,
  Jamie tak's his supper too;
Gangs to bed amang the hay,
  Snores like thunder all nicht through.
    Early bed and late uprise,
    Winna prove a man no' wise.

Jamie doesn't shave or wash,
  Doesn't strip himsel' for weeks,
Doesn't care a rap for cash—
  Begs his hat, or coat, or breeks:
    All the folk not over clean
    Aren't crack'd or daft I ween.

Some there are and no' ill clad,
  Dinna pay the tailor's due,
Yet ye dinna think them mad,
  Heth! ye needn't tak' that view.
    Men that get their clothin' free,
    May neither crack'd nor silly be.

It bothers me to settle it—
Is he lazy? Is he daft?
Has he much or little wit?
Rumour says, I know, "he's saft."
Rumour very often lies—
I think Jamie's very wise.

THE MANAGIN' WIFE

Troth Tim was a lonely man,
A wearifu' one, and wan;
The wife was a managin' woman, so he
Wi' her and her capers had raison to be
A weary and lonely man.

Time was he was glad enoo',
Right happy and prosp'rous too.
He laboured wi' a' his might,
And yet he could feel delight
In things that had naethin' to do wi' gain,
The raisin' o' cattle or sellin' o' grain.
He thocht at that time, puir man,
That life had mair in it than eatin' or claes;
But these were the happy and prosperous days
Before he grew weary and wan.

O Reader tak' heed while ye can,
Wherever, whaever (unmairried) ye be,
Get doon on your knees this minute wi' me,
And pray (that's supposin' ye're man),
As earnest a prayin' as ever was said,
That never may be it your fortin' to wed

Wi' one o' the managin' clan.
As sure as you mairry a managin' wife,
Sae sure will ye kill a' the pleasures o' life,
And you'll be a lonely man.

Now this was the kind o' life
Tim led wi' his managin' wife.
She worried him up wi' the lark
Wi' "Time ye were aff to wark."
When breakfast was hardly begun
She hopit he soon wad hae done.
He ocht to look after his men,
The warst (as she said) o' the glen.
The dinner-bit eaten in haste
He hardly had time to taste.
If supper was cowld he'd find,
She maybe'd he wadn't mind.
He ocht to be oot wi' the kye,
She thocht if she wasn't by
To look after things, the place
Wad soon be in evil case.
The cratur forgot in her pride
The earnin' was a' frae his side.
Before he had her to wife,
In that happy time o' life,
His horses, his cattle, and land,
His craps, and his maids, and men,
Were always the best in the glen.
He gave then wi' generous hand.
Sae, summer or winter frae dawnin' to dark
She claimit the credit while he did the wark.

'Twas plain that the welcome o' friends
Was sarvin' nae managin' ends.
Her welcome sae cauldish and dry,
Made friendliness pass the hoose by.

If Tim tried invitin' his kin,
'Twas inconvanience and sin.
What for did he bring folk in,
And she steep'd in wark to the eyes?
She thocht he might be mair wise.
Yet if he wad ask her "say when,"
She couldna be fash'd just then.
Sae friends o' his seldom were seen.
The hoose, too, was comfortless clean,
He maunna gang here or there,
Or litter a table or chair.
The readin' a book by night
Was wastin' o' fire and light.
The givin' o' aught was pain—
"Folk needed to think o' their ain."
Her doctrine was labour and savin' and save,
A comfortless doctrine that made her a slave.
Wark, wark, and naethin' but wark,
Wi' never a restin' frae dawn to dark.
"She doesn't let grass grow under her feet,"
For folk to say that was a recompense sweet.
"Wark hard and look after the pence,
That's wisdom and common sense."
'Twas "a' verra weel for to veesit and chat,"
But she had "nae time for sic nonsense as that."
Nae time to be gracious or sweet,
She grudgit the time to eat;
Nae time to grow flow'rs in the garden o' life,
Time to be hoosekeeper—nane to be wife,
Or lover and dear, dear friend;
Na, wark wi' her never did end,
O never by any chance.
She wark'd and she manag'd did Mrs. M'Bride,
But Tim, the puir body, he wearied and sigh'd
For love and auld thochts o' romance.

He had a good friend—a dog,
His comrade in field and bog;
And Sheelah could sympathise:
Puir Sheelah had saft broon eyes,
Saft eyes like the eyes o' a dove,
And Sheelah could tell her love
Tho' only a dog that bark'd.
And Tim in the fields as he wark'd
Was gladder by far when puir Sheelah was by
Than ever he was when the mistress was nigh.
For Sheelah, though maistly dumb,
Was never once sulky or glum;
She never look'd looks that were scowlin' or dark,
Nor preach'd, eternal, the duty o' wark
When hame frae his toil he wad come.

But Tim was to lose his friend.
'Twas this way she cam' by her end:
The time was the drawin' o' hay,
The load was the last o' the day,
The gate was the last in the way;
And Sheelah, half crazy wi' glee,
Was wildly careerin', when she
Got caught between pillar and cairt,
And ribs and her lungs and heart
Were mingled and mangled sair;
She had but a minute—nae mair—
To spend wi' her maister in mortals' land,
She usit that minute to lick his hand,
A minute,—just one to spare;
But when the eye speaks a minute's enoo
To tell ye a great, great deal;
A minute saw Sheelah, the lovit, the true,
Safe hame in the land o' the leal.

He lifted her into the cairt
Wi' sair and sorrowfu' heart;
Her bright yellow coat, blood-stain'd,
Was wet tho' it hadna rain'd;
And sadly they bore her hame.
The mistress produc'd when they came
Her usual list o' wark
That maun be got thro' ere dark.
The bringin' the dog was blame,
The greetin' * a sin and shame.
"Sic nonsense," quo' Mrs. M'Bride,
"Ye'd think 'twas a wean that died:
I wonder ye hae nae sense."
But Tim gied her mair offence
By diggin' a grave for his friend.
"How could he sic wark defend?
And surely a hole in the bog
Is guid enoo grave for a dog."
The maister persisted that day,
He once in a while had his way,
And fell for it sair under ban.
Sae muckle offendit was she wi' his ways,
She didna speak pleasant for three hail days;
Troth, Tim was a lonely man.

There's a narrow wee hoose ow'r by,
Folk in it look up to the sky,
Wi' neeboursome neebours a' side by side,
And bothersome weemin are there tongue-tied.
The place, to be sure, is dark,
But naebody preaches wark,
The addin' o' pence to pence,
Or value o' common-sense,
That Tim heard sae much o' frae Mrs. M'Bride.

* Weeping.

Sae, tir'd o' her gloomy face,
He came to think o' this place,
Wi' Sheelah awa', as a place to abide,
A place where he'd like to lie;
And wearied wi' wearisome Mrs. M'Bride,
He wearied, and wearied, and wearied and—died.
He went to the hoose ow'r by.

She left him his lane that day,
For once since his merriage withoot reproach;
He went by himsel', in a fine black coach,
Went aff in a stylish way.
And maist o' the folk o' the country side
Turn'd oot to convoy him in that last ride
To the narrow wee hoose ow'r by.
And she, tho' her heart was dry,
She wipit the tail o' an eye,
And lookit sae pious, resignit, and guid,
I'd lik'd to hae clootit her lugs, I would.
That she was ither than kind
I s'pose never enter'd her mind.
And the neebourin' weemin who cam' to condole,
They whisper'd to her, "It's a trouble to thole,
Nae doot it's a loss ye feel;
But then ye're shair to do weel,
Ye're sic a guid manager, Mrs. M'Bride."
Ay, that was the way they bolster'd her pride.
It's true that she "managit" him.
When a bit o' guid china to crockery's tied
The finer clay smashes.
Puir Tim, puir Tim,
Peace to his ashes.

ROGER JENKINS, TINKER

Roger Jenkins is the tinker,
And he warks in tin and airn,
And the clinkin' o' his hammer
Is the terror o' the bairn.
For they hear the threat frae mither
When they're no' behavin' weel,
That she'll gie them to the tinker
If they dinna cease to squeal.
They think he kidnaps children,
He will eat one at a meal,
And he drinks the blood o' babbies,
He has dealin's wi' the deil.
Sae the tinker's hammer clinkin'
On the cans and pots and pans,
To the bairnies' fearfu' thinkin'
Isn't wark o' mortal han's.

Mr. Roger Jenkins, tinker,
And a blacken'd one as weel,
Hands and face and claes a' inky,
Has nae dealin's wi' the deil.
He's a drinker o' the whiskey,
And the hammer in his han's
Is a-shakin' while it's clinkin'
Rivets in the pots and pans.
And his een are troubled sairly
Wi' the trouble whiskey brings,
They are blinkin' while he's thinkin'
And his clinkin' hammer rings.
He's a common hammer clinker,
Inky black o' face and han',
Winkin', blinkin', whiskey drinkin'
Till he scarce can see or stan'.

Mr. Roger Jenkins, tinker,
Is a dirty one as weel;
But the blackness o' his visage
Isn't blackness o' the deil.
Black the tinker is by nature,
As by nature grass is green;
But the clinkin', drunken crature
Needs but soap to mak' him clean.

JIM, THE CLOCKMAKER

If ye meet a wee man wi' a bottle-green coat,
And knee-breeches tidy and trim,
A bleezin' red handkerchie tied roon' his throat,
Ye'll ken it is clockmaker Jim.
Wi' pincers for pu'in and haimmers for knocks,
His pockets are fu' to the brim;
There's naethin' pertainin' to watches and clocks
But's naked and open to him.

He'll sell ye a watch—no' a paper-thin thing,
But one that will stand any test,
Wi' room in its wame for a thunderin' spring,
And cog-wheels and screws o' the best.
He's mighty successfu' in dalin' wi' locks,
But that's a sma' pairt o' his trade;
The maist o' his practice is doctorin' clocks,
And that's whaur his leevin' is made.

A clock, like a Christian, is apt to rin doon,
Her stappin' then's naethin' to blame,
Or tick-dooleroo, it may gie her a stoon,
Or somethin' be wrang in her wame.

Wi' narvous debility due to a shock,
She'll mebbe strike three when it's eight;
Whatever's the maitter that bothers the clock,
Wee Jimmie will soon put it straight.

And if wi' the troubles o' age she has got
A wakeness that slackens her pace,
He'll coax her until she gangs aff at a trot,
Like a three-year-auld winnin' a race.
He'll tell if she's rusty, or dusty, or dry,
And needs a bit greasin' wi' fat;
And if she is sulky, or shammin', or sly,
He kens how to trate her for that.

The clock that is shammin's a mighty big fool,
To think to beguile him wi' tricks;
He'll hae the hale guts o' her oot on a stool,
Before she has time for six ticks.
He'll scrape her intarnals, lock, barrel, and stock,
And mak' her gang whizzin', will Jim;
I tell ye, she'll hae to be clever—the clock,
That puts the comether * on him.

THE SCHOOLMASTER

A QUARE ould school was Lugar School,
A quare ould master, Tim M'Cool,

The bits o' larnin' that I know,
He batter'd in with many a blow;
"This cane," he'd say, "is Aaron's rod;"
And then, with every whack and prod,

* *To put the comether on*—to beguile, to win over.

"Take pains to larn, or larn with pain."
His stick he called "The Magistrate,"
With this the bigger boys he bate;
The "little sarpints" felt the cane.

Before the master came at ten,
We scram'd and danc'd about the flure;
But when we saw him at the dure,
Troth! it was pace and quateness then;
We'd stand to have our ears well wrung,
Or let our hands be blister'd sore
Wi' stripes of "Aaron's rod" before
We'd stand his bad, sarcastic tongue;
It started when he reach'd the school,
And then 'twas "blackguard," "donkey," "fool,"
"Ould humbug," "idiot," "stupid block,"
Till the school clos'd at three o'clock.

Perhaps we *were* a stupid lot;
And larnin' laid on with a stick
Was no' absorbit verra quick:
He'd this excuse—the fees he got
Would not ha' kept a dacent dog.
A wheen o' praties now and then,
A stone o' meal, a clockin' hen,
A load o' turf from Lugar bog,
A penny on alternate weeks,
The patchin' o' his Sunday breeks,
The labourin' o' his bit o' land,
The cartin' o' manure or sand,
The mendin' o' a desk or stool—
These were the fees o' Lugar School.

'Tis ten o'clock, and in comes Tim,
And what a hush comes in wi' him;
Over the greasy flure he limps,

Cursin' us all for noisy imps;
Then hangs his crutch-stick on a hook,
And calls for Jim Hart's copy-book.

Jimmie, poor divil, shakin' stands—
Pens don't take kindly to his hands.
"Plase, will ye tell me, Master Jim,
What these same caterpillars is?" says Tim.
"Plase, sor," says Tim, "my hands wor cowld."
"Give me that cane," the master howl'd;
"Ye'd drive the saints in heaven wild.
I'll warm yer fingers, Master Hart.
There's three from Aaron—now depart.
There's heat in Aaron's rod, my child."

Next, on a try to spell "belief,"
Wee Jennie Burdett comes to grief;
She puts two l's where one should be,
Which means she gets from Aaron three.
"There, that's to larn ye, Miss Burdett;
When geese are larn'd you'll get the prize;
Don't raise the thatch now wi' yer cries,
We'll want the roof this winter yet."

"At joggrify we'll now begin,
Say, where is Cairo, Paddy Flynn,
Now answer quick before I pass."
"Is't Cairo, sor? it's near Madras."
"Ye think so, Pat? Troth if you're right,
It's tuk a slide some frosty night;
And where d'ye think is Egypt plac'd
Since Cairo to Madras we've trac'd?"
"Sure it sor's in the Holy Land."
"H'm! Holy Pat! hould out yer hand;

You'll be Howly Pat this minute.
Aaron's asham'd o' sich a dunce.
Now stop yer roarin', stop at once;
A bull-calf wi' ye isn't in it."

Ev'ry Lugar boy or lass
Dreads the hated grammar class.
"A common noun," says Billy Baines,
"To be, to do, or suffer manes."
Says Tim, "Och, tare an' ages, duffer,
A noun you are, and you will suffer.
Jist rache me down the Magistrate,
He'll spake to you a word or two;
Here's wan for 'be' and wan for 'do';
Now go and 'suffer' on yer sate."

"Up wi' ye, now, ye Latin boys—
For goodness' sake, girls, stop that noise.
Jim, what is 'pater'?" "Father." "Good.
And what is 'mater'?" "Mother." "True;
We'll have to make a priest o' you."
"What's 'caper macer,' Willy Hood?"
"A lane ould goat, sor—isn't it?"
"A lane goat, Will's the manin' fit—
Lane like yerself—ye'll moind by that.
Now, my big dunder-headed Pat,
Here's a hard nut for ye to crack;
What's 'uxor'?" "Uxor, sor's a wife."
"The first time this in all yer life
Ye've answer'd right and sav'd yer back.
I'd like to finish up this class
Without a whack; but that, alas!
Is more than what I can expeck.
Do you, Pat Brennan, recolleck

What 'amo' manes?" "Yes, sor—I hate."
"There, hand me down the Magistrate;
Cudn't you let him rest a spell,
Whin up till now we'd done so well?"

There was no clock at Lugar School,
The nearest was at Biddy Hall's;
Bid kept a shop, and sold black balls,
Tobacco, tay, tape, thread, and spool;
And on ould Biddy's gable wall,
Which from school windows we could see,
She hoisted, when the clock struck three,
A round turf basket, which we all
Did hail with the delighted shout:
"The basket's up, sor, let us out."

Then Tim would shake his head and nod,
And smite the desk wi' Aaron's rod.
"You, girls," he'd say, "it's time to go;
Ye don't know all yez ought to know—
The more's the pity. If the cane
Cud tache ye, ye'd be wise indeed;
But whether larn'd or not, ye need
To keep yerselves discrate and clane—
Aiche wan a credit to her school,
Not a poor, empty, gigglin' fool.
And, boys, no fightin'—go home straight,
And larn yer lessons well at night;
Do what ye do wi' all yer might,
Or meet my friend, the Magistrate.
Ye don't mind now a word I say,
But when ye're all great men—some day—
Judges and chancellors I've made—
Wan o' ye, maybe, Pope o' Rome,—
Ye'll sorra for the tricks ye play'd
On me, yer master—now go home."

HANNAH, THE BREADWOMAN

"WHA is Hannah" do ye say?
And troth sae weel ye may,
For there's mighty little o' her
But a cloak that's auld and broon,
And atop o' it a bonnet
Wi' a cough inside the croon.
That's Hannah safe and sure,
Ye have her there, secure,
If ye find them wi' a basket
Fu' o' white bread frae the toon.

And ye maunna speer her age,
For ye'll put her in a rage,
And she'll tell ye when a babby
She forgot to write it doon.
But I think aboot twa hunner
O' the mark's no' far aboon,
For she's shrivell'd up and dried,
And ye micht say mummified;
She's a weezen'd wee auld woman
And a puff wad blaw her doon.

O the Antrim farmers' wives
Wark as hard as bees in hives,
They hae meal and flour and griddles,
Swingin' griddles large and roon',
And they bake guid halesome bannocks,
And they bake them white and broon.
But still the bodies feel
To be dacent and genteel,
They need the loaf o' baker's bread
That Hannah brings frae toon.

Troth the cratur's no' ill fed
That has lots o' griddle bread,
Sure it is the halesome eatin'
(And especially the broon)
But you never know the minute
That a neebour may come roon'.
And it makes the table gay,
And embellishes the tay,
To hae the loaf o' baker's bread
That Hannah brings frae toon.

O the Antrim farmers' wives
Tak' to wark like bees in hives;
They are up and at it early
And they dinna leave aff soon,
But they slack the day the bonnet
And the cloak and cough come roon',
For—I'll whisper't in your ear,
Sae that naebody can hear—
There is aye a bit o' gossip
Comes wi' baker's bread frae toon.

They hear o' all the strife
'Twixt O'Kelly and his wife,
O' Mrs. Reid's new mantle,
And Peggy Smith's silk goon.
That Nan and Jim are coortin'
And are gaun to mairry soon.
O it's nice to be genteel,
But it's nice to hae, as weel,
The gossip o' the country
Wi' the baker's bread frae toon.

V

AMUSEMENTS

THERE are people who hold that the famous chapter 'On Snakes in Ireland' might say all that is to be said of our country amusements. But these are the town-bred, who cannot conceive of existence as passable without plays, concerts, exhibitions, and such like expensive delights. To the town mind, town pleasures. To the country mind, the equally satisfying and far cheaper singing class, the tales by the blacksmith's fire, the games on the road—jumping, putting the stone, the larks at weddings and christenings, the barn dance, the quilting and many other recreative things. This may appear to be a mixed list, and a critical person may point out that a singing class is not properly an amusement. But that objector never can have attended a country singing class, or he would have known that the fun is on the way home, along the dark roads with companies of brave young fellows and pretty lassies; in hand squeezings and banterings, and gifts of posies and sweets, and looks and sayings that are not serious love-making, but only the half-shy, half-frightened glances of healthy young folks towards the delectable land which, later on, they hope to enter. That we know how to relax and recreate is testified by the rhymes on "The Dance at Widow Clarke's" and "The Quiltin'."

The reason-to-be of the quilting is this. Every economical housewife—and there are few who are otherwise—has her trash-bag, a thing of many pockets into which she stuffs

odd bits of silk or printed cotton, the remains of her own or her children's frocks, and scrappy textiles of all sorts. These come in handy for mending and patching, but the main use of the trash-bag is the provision of patchwork quilts. One is always in process of manufacture; it may be a simple draught-board pattern or a more elaborate arrangement of diamonds, angles, stripes, and squares. It is sometimes a work of years, becoming in the end a diary of events, a history, a museum of the family wardrobe of three or four generations. That lilac patch is a bit of grandmother's flowered gown—grandmother has slept in Layde for the last twenty years. Here is a blue bit from the mistress's own frock worn when the man she was to marry first came "speirin" after her. The flaming red diamond of the centre was once part of aunt's "Garibaldi." Tommie's shirt, Maggie's bibs, scraps over from new and least worn bits from old garments are carefully hoarded and utilised by the good wife. In a particular sense she lays the foundation of her work in her first-born, and in her youngest son finishes the corners thereof. Periods of retirement and quietness not unconnected with the young folks' arrival represent periods of activity in quilt production. She was "expectin' Jamie" when she worked the inner border of blue and white squares. Maggie was coming when an outer border of red and white was added. A corner piece reminds her that the very time she was stitching at it the postman came in with a letter and a postal order for five pounds, a gift from her brother in America, and they had not heard from him for years. The children had the measles while certain diamonds and angles took up their appointed stations. Another place on the chart brings back to the worker's mind the fright she had when Tommie got a finger shortened by the turnip cutter—she "minds" it so well, for she dropped the quilt and ran when she heard the screams.

At last there comes a day when the quilt is big enough

and "clever." For a thing to be "clever" in the glen sense is to be of generous proportions—the opposite of "skimpit." But the wrapper is very light and comfortless, it needs a warm blanket below it to give it weight, and below that a lining. It is "given out" that there is to be a "quilting," and on the settled evening a dozen or more young girls come with their thimbles and needles. The quilt is stretched on a frame, sometimes in the kitchen, oftener in the barn, and in a few hours young fingers have "quilted" it all over in zig-zag lines or crossed diagonals. Before they have finished the young men have commenced to arrive, they stand round the walls talking with the busy girls. When the last stitch has been put in, the floor is cleared, and there are games with forfeits, and guessing of riddles, and songs and dancing to the music of concertina or fiddle. The girls have had tea and currant buns early in the evening, and while they sewed, but it is usual also to provide something in the shape of supper for a later hour, and the genteelest families do have, with other things, blanc-mange—the "cowld shape" which, according to the rhymer, is productive of much uneasiness in or below the male breast.

THE QUILTIN'

It was the bonnie quiltin' that, in Mrs. Gibson's barn,
A nicht to be remember'd lang in annals o' the glen.
The notice gi'en a week afore to whom it micht consarn
Had brocht the purty lassies oot, and lassies bring the men.

Wee Meg had come,—'deed half the glen, a score o' girls at laste,
And fifteen stone o' Alice Hill, the sweetest lassie there.
It needs a yard or mair o' airm to gang aroon' her waist,
But what's circumference to love? a figure, naethin' mair.

And while the lassies sew'd their seam the men stood roon' the wa',
And jok'd and laugh'd wi' narvous glee, and turnit in their taes,
And thocht aboot the dance to come wi' fears that werena sma',
And wore the air o' men that ken they wear their Sunday claes.

The loan o' a piano made the quiltin' mair genteel,
A great big music-box it was wi' legs and feet and lid,
And Mrs. Broon's wee dochter, och! she handled it sae weel.
She played a thing they ca' a piece—I'll tell you that she did.

She hit it here and there at first in quite permiskus style,
And then her fingers hopp'd and skipp'd like heelanders at jigs;
She twiddled at the richt han' end, the squealy part, awhile,
And finish'd near the middle, slow, wi' twa or three guid digs.

Then Jimmie Tamson sung a sang aboot the silent grave
And winds o' heaven howlin' roond aboot a willa tree,
And death in some desarted place beside the lonely wave,
And while a breath remain'd to him he aye wad think o' thee.

A plisant cheerfu' thing it was, and sung wi' muckle fire,
But ance when he wad "think o' thee," he tuk the note too high,
And gi'ed the cattle sic a fright they brak loose in the byre,
It tuk us nigh on half-an-'oor to pacify the kye.

That brocht us to the supper-time, 'boot echt o'clock I think;
And while we quieted the bastes and tied them up again
The mistress laid the table oot wi' ateables and drink,
Cowld shape dispos'd wi' lemonade—and here I wad complain.

Cowld shape's nae food to put intil the wame o' man that's wise,
Tho' lassies seem to thrive on it as horses thrive on corn,
Cowld, heavy, and onsartain there it lies and lies and lies,
And mak's the man that ate it rue the day that he was born.

"Ye'll tak' a moothfu', Jem, or twa," the mistress says, and he
The first time asked, as is polite, respeckfully declines,
But when she press'd he tuk the dish, and—weel—the mistress—she—
She quite forgot that Jamie's mooth was built on lairgish lines.

Soon some one said to pass the shape. There was nae shape to pass;
They wonder'd whaur the mischief 'twas—and was it hid in jest?
But Jamie knew—aye, troth he did—he felt it sair, alas,
In his equatorial region just underneath the vest.

Och, shape's a cowld remorseless thing for half of humankind,
And specially wi' lemonade, it's enemy to rest,
If you're a man and try it—weel, it won't be hard to find,
A wee bit later, wi' a pain, a bit below your chest.

The supper o'er, the dance began, o' steps the men had nane,
But willin' lassies cleek'd their skirts and show'd their partners hoo;
"It's this way—watch," a lass wad say, then she wad make it plain,
But a' the laddie minded was the ankle and the shoe.

Aweel—wi' grace on lassie's side and vigour on the men's,
They danc'd in ev'ry step and time and custom o' the airt;
And tho' they danc'd besides in ways nae dancin'-master kens,
The airm aroon' yer lassie's waist's the maist important pairt.

In step, in speed, in height o' hop, nae twa o' them agreed,
Yet still thro' heat and blunders a' they gaily parsever'd,
And tho' each lass a dizzen times declar'd she was clean deid,
She quickly cam' to life again as soon as she was spier'd.

O 'twas the famous quiltin', that, in Mrs. Gibson's barn,
And folk that liv'd a distance aff, awa', far up the glen,
It's true as true, a sartin fact, and nae bit rhymer's yarn,
They werena in their beds that nicht till nearly half-past ten.

THE DANCE AT WIDOW CLARKE'S

WHILE pleughin' tither morn
Preparin' for the corn,
I thocht awhile my eyesicht was surely givin' way,
For there was Jamie Broon
A-wheelin' roon' an' roon',
An' jumpin' in the fashion the silly turkeys hae.

The cause I cudna' tell,
He pleugh'd just like mysel',
But stappit aye the horses in sic a cur'ous way.
Then roon' he went an' roon,
An' happit up an' doon:
"Is this," thinks I, "St. Vitus, or is his heid astray?"

I left my trusty yoke
To see if 'twas a joke—
He's no' the chap for larkin' or wastin' time in play.
Ses I to him, "What's wrang,
Hae ye these tantrums lang;
Whatever is the maitter my Jamie, lad, the day?"

He seemed a bit put oot,
"Ye'll ken," quo' he, "nae doot,
There's gaun to be some dancin' at Weeda Clarke's the day.
I'm practeesin' the waltz,
An' tho' wi' mony faults,
I'm able noo to dae it in a sort o' kind o' way.

"It's no' a common dance;
It cam', they say, frae France
Or Jarmany it may be—some far ootlandish way,
We'll no' brak up till three,
In fack it's gaun to be
The kind o' enterteenment that the top o' gintry hae.

"At tay we'll no' sit doon,
But stan' in clusters roon',
The fashion noo requires it—at laste that's what they say.
An' ev'ry livin' sowl
Will tak' his cup or bowl,
An' drink it in an aisy and permiscus sort o' way.

"The supper will be cowld,
And we will hev, I'm towld,
Corn'd beef wi' tripe and onions towards the break o' day.
They're shair to dae it weel
Wi' ev'rything genteel;
The weeda kens the mainners that the top o' gintry hae.

"I'm sweet on Maggie Clarke,
And this maist wearin' wark,
For sake o' her I'll dae it though it turns my heid to grey.
I'll feenish fair or foul,
But wush wi' heart an' sowl,
The gintry tuk divarsion in some raisonable way.

"I ken the auld quadreel,
And polka middlin' weel,
But whirlin' till yer dizzy is a deil's inventit way;
We spin roon' like a tap,
Until we're fit to drap,
Then hap the way I'll show ye—as the titled gintry dae."

He happit in the air,
A fut at laste or mair,
His brogues wad weigh a stane at least, no' countin' o' the clay.
An' Jim's a heavy man,
Saę fancy if ye can,
The sort o' infant arthquake 'twas that followed the display.

"Jim, dear," ses I, "them brogues
They're mortial heavy rogues,
And dancin' in sic pounders is no' the gintry's way."
"That's true," ses he, "that's true,
I need a lighter shoe,
But hae to dae withoot it, frien', and dance in what I hae."

I thocht o' Maggie's taes,
Her purty dancin' claes;
I thocht, too, o' the rumpus—o' the gret catastrophay,
That's bound to come as soon
As Jamie's heavy shoon
Hae smash'd puir Maggie's slippers sma' and feet in them the day.

I'm goin' to the dance,
I maun see Jamie prance,
The sicht will be as funny—just as guid as any play.
When he is whirlin' roon'
And happin' up an' doon,
And gangs in brogues a-waltzin' as the titled gintry dae.

VI

OUR WALK AND CONVERSATION

PAT's little rhyme, "The Way we Tell a Story," in which one man tells another how he said "no" to a third who asked of him a favour, is scarcely an exaggeration. Some of us in this country know how to dilute the wine of narrative with the water of verbiage. A man likes to bask in the admiration of his fellows, to feel that ears near him are strained to catch the words that drop from his mouth, and where incident is scarce and vocabularies limited, a free use of diluent is natural. With us a story is enlarged by a free use of phrases intended to call the attention of the audience to any point the narrator may think specially interesting. Such phrases are "Mind ye," meaning "remember;" "d'ye mind?" meaning "have you observed?" "like that," which is supposed to describe the suddenness of an action, but which is often used unmeaningly as an expander. The simple statement that "she sat down" is made longer and more emphatic by the form "what does she do but sit down," &c. Tom Jones as an actor in a scene will be referred to as "my bowld Tom Jones." Digression is much appreciated, and therefore on the first mention of Tom in a narrative it is proper to remind your hearers that he married Ellen M'Manus, who was the daughter of ould Jimmie M'Manus who lived in Ballytearim, and that his wife's sister married a man "o' the name o' Tamson" you think, who went to Scotland three years ago—or was it four?—and was something in the coal-

mining—no—it was brick-laying—it was Robert M'Keown you were thinking about at the coal-mining—you remember him—him as took James Devine's farm; he had it for two year and then his father died in Scotland, and he gave up the farm and went over and got some job at the coal-mining at two pound ten a week—was it two pound ten—'deed, and you believe it was three pound ten—you can't really mind now—and so on. The corrections, suggestions, and questions of the audience will take up considerable time, for we think it proper in story-telling that one should know the ramifications of every family mentioned, even unto the third or fourth generation backward. When your own sense of the fitness of things or the impatience of a listener has warned you that the path of digression has been followed far enough, there are certain formulæ which it is customary to use. You say "well, at any rate," or "well, it doesn't matter, but," or "well, to make a long story short," and then make a bee-line back to Tom Jones and keep with him and his doings until the next digression. When a conversation comes to be narrated there are tremendous possibilities of expansion in the simple indicatives, I says, he says, she says. Take the first, and by listening to an expert you will learn what an expansive power lies in these words and their variations. They so enlarge the original dicta that the ingenuous listener is surprised at the value he is getting, while to the narrator they give pause, allowing a slow mind to ransack the corners of memory for every shred of event or saying. The "I says" may be reversed, becoming "says I." It may be placed at the beginning or end of a sentence. It may be used in the sentence after every three or four words. It may be duplicated, becoming "I says, says I." One arm of the duplicated form may be lengthened and embellished, as "I says to him, says I," or "says I to him, I says." It may be triplicated, as "says I to him, I says, says I," or "I says to him, says I, I says." No man knows better than Sam

Mulreany the value to the story-teller of the words that indicate quotation. Listen to him.

He has been digging along the dyke sheugh the margin too narrow to be taken by the plough. In the next field is a newly-bought cow belonging to his neighbour, Robert Mawhinney. As is the custom with cows in a strange field, this one tries to get out, and tries persistently. She has chosen a point in the field where a hole in the hedge has been roughly filled by a few larch poles. In an awkward leap she manages to get a foreleg between two of these poles, and, slipping back into the ditch, the leg is broken. Sam, on the scene soon afterwards, finds the cow in trouble. He goes for the owner, and the two, assisted by a chance passer-by, relieve the cow from her awkward position. He has now something to tell.

It is five o'clock, and there is light until seven, but Sam cannot wait. He stops work, and mounts the hill to the cottage of his nearest neighbour, who is a man with a large family, and who has living with him his father and his wife's mother and sister. The head of the house and the elder boys are in the fields, but there are enough at home to make an appreciative audience. Ostensibly Sam goes in for a light. He holds the pipe in his left hand, pressing the tobacco in with the thumb, while with the right hand he raises his cap, and scratches a head bearing a rough shock of red hair. After the usual salutations and observations on the weather, and after a bit of live peat has been held against the pipe to start it, Sam says he must be going; but there is an atmosphere which cannot be mistaken round a man with a story to tell, and the inmates of the cottage who can move gather round the smoker like flies round sugar. Old Nannie, who cannot move by reason of age and infirmities, strains her head forward, and puts a hand behind an ear to arrest the passing sound.

"Ony news, Mister Mulreany?"

"Och, naethin' much," says Sam deprecatingly; then, after a silence of the length of three pipe-puffs, he opens thus:—

"I'm thinkin' Rabert Mawhinney's no' verra comfortable aboot his coo the nicht."

The reader will be spared the slow development of the story. Sam has come to the time of his finding the owner of the cow to tell him of the disaster. This is how he proceeds, the italics represent ejaculations of listeners:—

"Ses I to him, ses I, that coo o' yours, ses I, she'll no' be verra contint the night, ses I, I ses to him—like that, d'ye mind?"

"*Aye, noo, cliver for ye.*"

"'Och,' ses he, 'the coo's all right,' ses he, he ses to me."

"All right, I ses, all right; but, ses I, I don't think, ses I, as she's pertickler comfortable; I wudn't say she was, ses I."

"*Troth, an' she wasn't that same.*"

"'Don't bother yerself,' says he, he says, 'the coo's strange, that's all,' ses he."

"'*Deed, an' she wus strange.*"

"She's strange, ses I, av coorse; but, ses I, I ses, I wudn't call it comfortable hingin' wi' a broken leg between twa powls, ses I, just that way, d'ye mind."

"*O, the Lord love ye for a funny man, Mr. Mulreany.*"

"'Wha ses her leg's bruk?' ses he, he ses."

"Well, I was remarkin' it myself, ses I, I ses; I had obsarved it, ses I, I ses to him; but, ses I, don't put yerself aboot, ses I; I wudn't onconvanience yerself, ses I, quate lek that way, d'ye mind."

"*Och, what did he say to that?*"

"'The divil,' ses he, sharp like that, 'the divil,' he ses."

"*Och, noo, did he say 'the divil'?*"

"Ses I to him, I ses, I don't think, ses I, that there's ony need to be usin' langwidge, ses I. I may be right, ses

I, or I may be wrong, ses I; but, ses I, I don't see no call to be usin' langwidge, ses I."

"*Yer sowl to glory, ye giv' it to him.*"

"'It's them childer,' ses he, 'as has done the mischief,' ses he; 'I mended that hole yesterday,' ses he, he ses, 'but they would have it pulled open an hour after,' ses he, d'ye mind?"

"*An' he put it on the childer, did he?*"

"Ses I to him, ses I, if ye had put up a wee bit o' a boord, ses I, wi' 'Trespadgers Parsecuted' on it, ses I, they wudn't hev touched the hedge, ses I."

"*Sure, it's yourself as can tell folk how to do things.*"

"Well, we worked tryin' to git her free for half-an-hour, and only for a dacint man comin' along the road that seen the fix we were in, and giv' us a han', I don't believe she would ha' been oot yit."

"*There now.*"

"I wint doon the road a bit wi' the man, an' ses I to him, ses I, an' what purfession might ye be in? ses I."

"'It's the cowld portage,' * ses he."

"*The Lord bliss us, the cowld portage, an' what might it be?*"

"'It's wee holy books and gospels at a penny,' ses he; an' ses I to him, ses I, wud ye sell many o' them? ses I. 'Weel,' ses he, 'I wud sell sax in a day,' ses he, 'and I wud sell saxty,' ses he, 'it's onsartin,' ses he; but I think he must mak a dacent livin', for he was weel put on." †

"*Weel, he must sell a lock* ‡ *o' them.*"

A too nice economy in domestic matters does not meet with our approbation. William Maloney is a farm hand, who has seen the interior of nearly every house in the country. He will work a half or a whole day, or two days, or two weeks, or two months, just as you may need, and will leave you with nothing in prospect for the next day, and withal bearing a light heart. Hear him—

* Colportage. † Well dressed. ‡ Lot.

"It's a quare country, so it is; not that it's the counthry at all; it's the people, the counthry's all right. There's William M'Bride, wi' thritty acre o' land, and no' a bad parch in the whole o' it, and, bedad, near's no name for him. Wee Paddy M'Wha was goin' past his gate one day wi' a load o' peats, and drapped twa o' them. William saw them, and whups them up and into the kitchen wi' them—that's as thrue as thrue, and him wi' eight hunder pound in the bank—eight—hunder—pound—d'ye hear the crack that gives? He's a miser'ble wee snipe, that's what he is; he wud lift a pratie aff the flure, he wud, raly. And there's Widow Morrison, wi' nivir a farden but twa shillin' a week frae her uncle, and what she can make oot o' her coo and wee bit o' land; and ye culdn't go past her dure but it's 'Mr. Maloney, won't ye tak' a bowl o' broth?' or, 'Mr. Maloney, won't ye tak' a cup o' tay?' 'Deed, and the last day I passed her hoose she made tay for me while I was takin' the broth.* Catch William M'Bride axin' ye in for a cup o' tay; he wud skin a flay for its hide. But that's the way o' the warld; them that has plinty wudn't gie ye naethin', and them that has naethin' wud divide onything they hev."

We believe in educating a child for the station to which it has pleased Providence to call it. Mary Somers has asked her mother for sixpence for a new school-book. This is the way Mrs. Somers unburdens herself to her next-door neighbour. "Mary she says, 'Mither, I want saxpence for a yookled† book; teacher says I'm to get it.' A what? says I. 'A yookled book,' says she. And what's a yookled book? says I. 'Oh,' she says, 'it's wee figmajigs and curly Q's.' And in the name o' patience, child, says I, d'ye think

* The combination is not invented. Some ladies, interested in temperance work, started a refreshment-room in a northern Antrim town. A frequent order on market days was, "A bowl o' broth and a cup o' tay." The tea had to be strong and sweet, and the cup running over, or it was not appreciated.

† Euclid.

I'm goin' to gie ye sixpence to divart yersel' wi' makin' fig-majigs? says I. What d'ye mane? I says. 'It's wee rings and three-cornered things,' she says, 'and ye hev to put A B C on them.' I declare to ye I haven't patience wi' teachers takin' the bread oot o' people's mouths for sic nonsense. I tell't Mary, says I, I'm not goin' to pay for any fancy larnin', says I; if ye can write a dacent bit letther, says I, and coont the price o' eggs, says I, I think that's enough and mair than I had mysel'. If a girl wants to do onything by the common let her wark somethin' in wool that she can hand doon to her grandchildren, that's what I think—yookled, indeed—heth!"

We loathe all affectations. Maggie M'Alister, known in her early teens as Black Meg from the colour of her hair, went to Belfast to learn dressmaking. From thence, well dressed and much fined down in manner and appearance, she returned to pay a visit to her people. It was the time of the drying of flax after withdrawal from the "holes." Maggie met on the road one of her old friends, Mary M'Donnell, who had been engaged all morning in spreading over a field the wet, black, ill-smelling flax in long thin lines. Maggie said by way of salutation, "Well, Mary, have you been spreading flax?" Mary's indignation knew no bounds—she told the story at the first house she passed: "The idea of her settin' herself up that way. I could ha' knockit the face aff her." "Could have" in this relation signifies not the ability, but the desire to perform. Of course, what Maggie should have said was, "Weel, Mary, hae ye been spreedin' lint?"

The libels of the English notwithstanding, we do *not* take the pig to our bosom. He dwells in his own house, with his own family, and commerce with him is restricted to matters connected with commissariat and the payment of rent; we, for his services, providing him with free board and lodging for the term of his n—hem—life. Social intercourse with him there is none. It is to be noted that the glen pig

is eminently clean and respectable, as is evidenced by the following true story. The writer was one day driving from Cushendall to Cushendun. On the way was met a pig who had been diverting himself in a mud-hole and was, therefore, *not* clean. The horse shied at the porker, provoking the remark to the carman that it was a strange horse for the country that did not know a pig. "But look at the dirt o' it," was the driver's reply. Where pigs are plentiful and a dirty one frightens a horse, it must be assumed that the normal pig is clean and well behaved.

A word or two about some little peculiarities of our speech. To "behave" is to behave well;—on the other hand, "behaviour" unqualified is bad behaviour. We say "larn" for "teach," "mind" for "remember." A person is "married on" not "married to" another. "Novelty" is "newance." "It's newance to see you" means that your visits have been few for a time. For one to claim that he is "nearly perfeck" does not mean that he claims to be faultless; he means only that he is nearly sure of what he is saying. A native would never be "sick" although he may be often "no' weel." An old woman is an "ould wife" whether she is married or not. A child "favours" father or mother if it "resembles" one or other. The word "terrible" is used instead of the "awfully" of polite society, thus we have things that are "terrible nice" and even "terrible wee." "Mortal" (pronounce mortial) is used in the same sense, and a lady of prepossessing looks and fine manners will be spoken of as "a mortial nice woman." A "light" person is not giddy, he or she is of fair complexion; a "near" person is a miser.

We are addicted to porridge, and we like them thick. The sentence has been framed so as to exhibit another singularity of our speech. Porridge is plural. No son of the soil would dream of saying "it" of porridge. One will say, "they're singed the day," or "they're a bit thin," in dissatisfaction, or with satisfaction "them's good ones." That

the use of fire-water is not unknown will be seen from the rhyme of James M'Wha, Esq–u.

Detractors say that it would pay us better to spend more time in the fields and less in "crackin'" by the fireside, so prone are uncharitable minds to reprove as fault what is really virtue. We take a kindly interest in the affairs of our neighbours.

We sum appreciation of good character in two words—dacent, responsible. A man may be "dacent" and not "responsible," a kindly useless creature, "nobody's enemy but his own," spending in drink or on gifts to strangers his last half-sovereign while wife and weans go dinnerless, and yet a good-hearted man. On the other hand a man may be "responsible" and not "dacent," a hard dour man, honest, but paying the least while he exacts the most, suspicious, fault-finding. When you find a man here who is, by common consent, "dacent and responsible," trust him.

Our names are McDonnell (the grand old name, MacDonnell of the Glens) McAlister, McAulay, McBride, McNeill, O'Neill, McCollum, McElheran, McIlvenny and McKay.

THE WAY WE TELL A STORY

Says I to him, I says, says I,
Says I to him, I says,
The thing, says I, I says to him,
Is just, says I, this ways.
I hev', says I, a gret respeck
For you and for your breed,
And onything I cud, I says,
I'd do, I wud indeed.
I don't know any man, I says,
I'd do it for, says I,

As fast, I says, as for yoursel',
That's tellin' ye no lie.
There's nought, says I, I wudn't do
To plase your feyther's son,
But this, I says, ye see, says I,
I says, it can't be done.

THE PARRITCH POT

HERE'S to the parritch pot,
The plain straight-for'ard parritch pot.
Nae man need fear
The loss o' gear,
Wha still wi' milk and meal has got
A hoult o' you, O parritch pot.

Here's to the parritch pot,
The fine big-bellied parritch pot.
An interview
Or twa wi' you
Mak's man continted wi' his lot,
Ye big warm-hearted parritch pot.

Here's to the parritch pot,
The halesome, heartsome parritch pot.
Our blood and bane,
The clever brain,
And a' the health and strength we've got,
Are spoon-dug frae the parritch pot

Here's to the parritch pot,
The hamely, healthy parritch pot.
There's folk may sweer
By beef and beer,
We ken whaur richer fare is got,
We rin to you, O parritch pot.

Here's to the parritch pot,
The grand three-leggit parritch pot.
A man is bowld,
Resists the cowld,
Is fit to face the hardest lot,
If you stand by, O parritch pot.

Here's to the parritch pot,
The anshent Irish parritch pot.
I ax what chance,
Hae bairns in France,
To grow their size if so they've got,
Nae firm-upbuildin' parritch pot.

Here's to the parritch pot,
The black ould-fashion'd parritch pot.
It's worth to live
For what you give,
We like them stiff, we like them hot,
You're good to us, ould parritch pot.

JAMES M'WHA, Esq-u.*

The trouble was whiskey wi' Mr. M'Wha,
That wakeness for sperrits that brings to the wa'
The thoosan's that should be sae happy and weel,
If only—if only—if only—aye IF
The craturs could meet wi' a negative stiff,
The ca' o' the liquor that's used by the deil
To tak' awa' sense,
Pounds, shillin's, and pence,

* The rhymer affects to believe that the pronunciation of the familiar contraction is Es-q. = Es-ku.

The health o' the body and health o' the sowl.
Lord save the puir sinner where drink has a houl',
That's ruin'd, that's lost,
For here and hereafter—for that is the cost
O' drink to the drunkard—be't woman or man,
Unless in yer marcy ye lend them a han'.

But Misther M'Wha,
He wasn't no tinpenny farmer, na!
A man o' some dacency, substance and that,
Has sat
At table I'm tould, wi' a rale M.P.
Himsel' an Esq-u.
I've seen it on prented invillops blue,
As plain as could be.
And therefore I'm able to state ye the facks,
"On His Majesty's Sarvice" and "Income Tacks,"
And him wi' a gate and an avenue,
Coorse not like the gintry's, but still a' the same
A somethin' by common in ragions like this.
'Deed folk couldn't miss
But gi'e him the blame;
And him wi' a daughter o' twinty at school,
A boorder that cost him a guid fifty pound,
Food and larnin' a' found—
But the extras, presarve us! the extras was crool.
'Twas frae Misthress M'Wha that the thing was heerd tell,—
A guinea for weshin'! I ca' it a crime—
It parfit amaz'd me.—Thinks I to mysel',
Whaur lassies maun pay a hale guinea a time,
For clanin' or weshin' their faces and arms,
It's not me would kiss them at end o' the tarms.
Them extras is scand'lous,
Extortion, or wuss.

But the story, the story o' Misther M'Wha.
Aisy now, aisy now, wait a bit, wait,
Or maybe I winna tell ye ava'.
I wantit to state
He was frien' to the kirk,
And never attempted his duty to shirk.
Knew a' aboot motions, the rules o' debate,
And takin' the cheer and beggin' to state,
The p'ints, and amendments, and findin's, and a',
And passin' you nanny muss—cudn't be bate.
A regilar pillar was Misther M'Wha,
But losh, if a pillar, a pillar's not straight
The buildin' it hauds up's in danger to fa'.
In case it was you
(In a figure I mane)
Was a nail in a pew,
Or maybe a pane,
Or a boord in the flure,
Or a latch to the dure,
And rusty, or dusty, or crooked, or thin,
Or broken, it never would matter a pin.
(That is as consarnin' the kirk) I consave,
But pillars! och, pillars must larn to behave.
It doesn't look weel
To see one on his heel
(I'm drappin' that figure o' pillar ye ken,
And spakin' o' ane o' yer brithers o' men),
Swayin' this way and that way, and for'ard and aft,
Like a crazy ould, cranky ould, top-hamper'd craft.
Lurch, lurchin' and lurch,
And as solemn as church,
And gropin' his pockets, and starin' aroun',
Purtendin' that somethin' was drapp'd on the groun';
And wi' the consate,
The fool, that you haven't obsarvit his state.

Och, drink makes a blot
On any man's record, I don't care his lot;
But in a purfessor that ought to be straight,
It's no ways convanient or proper;—it's not.

You're sniggerin' at the purfessin' idee,
You're not o' the kirk—nae purfessor—I see.
That isn't *your* name;
The bigger your shame.
Will want o' purfessin' p'y debts for ye, man?
Be sure where ye stan':
Wha was it that *practees'd* that you might be free?
Ye mind ye o' Him and His sair agonie;
The worn face a-wet
Wi' red blood he sweat,
For *you* in the garden o' Gethsemane,
The cross and the darkness endurit for *you*.
Ye ken that its true,—
It can't be made less.
And what by the way o' return do ye do?
Ye "dinna purfess."

I'm thinkin' the day o' the judgment will find
A fairish big lot o' ye o' the same mind.
Ye'll trimble a wee
When ax'd for your plea,
Then oot wi' your answer, "We didn't purfess."
And that's your reliance, O—h'm—ha—yes.
The angels will gasp at an answer sae poor,
And silence in heaven by space o' an 'oor,
Will maybe no' lave ye sae sartin and sure.
Ye couldn't be bother'd, ye didn't refleck,
'Twas aisy, 'twas lazy—ye didn't purfess.
Too late noo for trouble, too late for redress.

Ye ken what's desarv'd,
Sae, leftwards and backwards, a place resarv'd,
And hardly seleck.

But the story. It's comin', it's comin', and soon;
Ye think I'm addickit to wanderin' roon'.
Ha' patience, my frien',
I was thinkin' o' mithers and some o' their ways,
Wi' wee bit belangin's o' infancy's days.
Ye ken what I mean—
The curl in a bit o' silk paper atwist,
The wee baby sark
That would hardly be able to cover your fist,
The first leather shoe, a coo frae the Ark,
The treasures o' mitherhood safely laid by,
And naethin' like them to be wanted again.
And look'd at and kissit when naebody's nigh,
And wet wi' a tear, tho' it may be the wean
Is man grown and weel
And trusty as steel.
But O, when it's itherwise, when he goes wrang
And staggerin' comes
Frae them he ca's *chums*,
Een heavy, unsteady, sits doon wi' a bang.
A fool that's self-made, thick, stupid, and dense,
Just a thing, not a baste
(For a baste has some sense),
And not in the laste
Like that wee bit armfu' the mither thinks o'.
And memory stirs
And brings back the things o' the days lang ago—
The wee lovit bundle wi' face against hers,
The auld babby language, the coo and the crow,
And the arms roon' the neck.
And the weshin' and hushin' and puttin' to rest,

Sounds, sights—all are back.
And *this* is that wee one that slept on her breast,
This *thing* is that son,
This soul devil-won.
O mair than the Vargin o' prophesied Word
Hae kenn'd the heart bleedin' at thrust o' a sword.

But the story, the story o' Misther M'Wha,
Is it comin' ava' ?
Aisy, my pet,
We'll come to it yet.
We'll say that she's deid,—that mither, I mean.
The laddie is coortin', has found him a queen,
And O sic a girl!
Frae the tapmaist wee curl
To the shapely wee heel at the back o' her shoe,
Just parfit, a' through.
And, mind ye, the mortial nice women are few.
There's girls that are guid, and what ye ca' plain,
And there's ithers again
That's purty weel fac'd,
But wi' squab hands or feet,
Or a tarr'ble thick waist;
Or maybe ye'll meet
Wi' lassies that's clarty (that's thro'-ither), or
That's lazy, or stupid, or sly, which is waur.
Or one may be comely as lang as she's dumb,
But as soon as she spakes
The spell on ye breaks,
"Not any mair, thank ye—not any mair, mum."
But this wee bit bird
(The wee's for endearment—she's middle in size)
Is one by God's word
Ordain'd to be bonnie and lovin' and wise,
Hair dark, plentifu',

Her een like deep wells sae refreshin' and pure,
Braid unwrinkled broo,
A mouth that wad kisses frae cherubs allure,
Child's blush-flooded skin,
A sweet dimpled chin,
A hand and an airm weel roonded and fu',
A foot that a sculptor might copy, sae true,
And her voice is the bird's, or a mixture o' three,
The lark's and the blackbird's and dove's, for ye see
It's cheery and deep, and it's lovin' as weel,
To hear it's to know that its owner is leal.
She's kind to wee weans
And ould folk wi' pains.
God bless her, God bless her, she's one o' the few
Wi' whom the ould Tempter has little to do.

Did ever ye think o' how one o' these lambs
Needs hundreds, aye thoosan's o' thoosan's o' years
O' wark in the darkness before she appears.
The same as ould David has writ in his Psalms
(A quare thing, I tell ye, that *he* didn't know),
Writ doon and plann'd oot—O ages ago,
Aye, even before the first Adam had birth,
His name and his form and, aye, even his thought,
The substance to be o' him curiously wrought,
Says he, "in the innermost pairts o' the earth."
And this girlie's father and mither, the pair,
They had to be just and exack as they were.
Their fathers and mithers again, ye will see,
Exackly the sort that they happen'd to be.
Sae backwark to every one o' the springs
That brought the girl's life frae beginnin's o' things.

That hair that ye like and that frames the sweet face,
'Tis hundreds o' years sin' it cam' to her race;

And her nose that's sae straight
Is o' verra ould date,
And the winnin' wee smile that plays roon' her mou',
It weel may be due
To a crossin' o' blood
As far back as the flood;
And she had to be born and just here and just when
She as infant appear'd
And had to be rear'd
Wi' folk and the food and the air o' the glen,
To be what she is,
The plan o' the Lord and the handiwork His.

And a sweetheart comes roon',
The winter is June,
And O but it's bonnie, the bright fu' moon!
He comes, and the hours
Are sunny and carry the scent o' the flow'rs.
He comes, bonnie lad,
And O but it's cheerfu', the lark's sang glad,
And life is worth livin', good thrives, and the bad
Is shrivell'd and shrunk.
And he comes,—and he comes,—and he comes,—comes
DRUNK.
O murderin' brute, sair hearts and wet een,
There's sickness and death for the glad might-ha'-been.
And trouble for a' is ordainit to be,
And O but it's dreary the sab o' the sea!
And O but it's lonely the seagull's wheep!
And nights are sae weary if folk canna' sleep
For a heart's dull ache.
The wind that was warm is sae cauld like and chill,
O sorrow can kill
And a heart can break.

I nearly forgot aboot Misther M'Wha,
And 'deed and his story's no' muckle ava',
A silly bit haver to laugh at a wee,
And no' unconneckit wi' drinkin' ye'll see.
He had gone to the smiddy to see aboot wheels,
And drapp'd in at six at ould Lucky M'Neill's,
(This Lucky M'Neill's is a public, ye ken),
And there he sat drinkin' till lang after ten;
When Peggy, the maid,
Wi' the sarvin'-man's aid,
Got him oot and insens'd * it was time to gang hame.
The moon it was fu', and M'Wha was the same.
Now the distance o' hame frae ould Lucky's abode
Was three mile ow'r moorland, or five by the road.
But Misther M'Wha, just fuddled a bit,
Declar'd for the moor he was parfitly fit;
Then, takin' his bearin's by light o' the moon,
He had the good sense to hand Peggy his purse,
And set for himsel' a due wasterly coorse,
That should, straightly follow'd, ha' seen him hame soon.
But the whins on the moor were the shairpest o' whins,
And prick'd the man's legs like a paper o' pins,
And he, at ev'ry fresh scratch to his j'ints,
Fell aff to the suth'ard a couple o' p'ints.
And ere very lang he was steerin' due east,
By-and-bye, when his list to the port side increas'd,
It slew'd him to nor-'ard, until in twa 'oors
He compass'd the circle complate on the moors.
Thro' wakeness o' nature, or trick o' the deil's,
Straight back was he landed at Lucky M'Neill's.

He thought he was hame tho'. He kicked up a stour
And rattled the thumb-latch and bang'd at the dure,

* In Ulster parlance "to insense" a person "into" a thing is to make him understand it.

And cried oot to Sarah (that's Misthress M'Wha),
"Let me in, let me in, dear, I'm no' drunk ava'."
Poor Peggy was waken'd, she crept frae her bed,
And keek'd thro' the windy—she slept overhead—
She saw who it was, anger loosen'd her tongue,
She ca'd him a blackguard that ought to be hung
For keepin' poor people frae sleepin' a wink,
And comin' at one in the mornin' for drink.
He heard the girl bargin' like one in a maze.
"It seems it is Peggy, not Sarah," he says.
Quo' he as he balanc'd himsel' on his heels,
"Do ye mane for to say I'm at Lucky M'Neill's?
Is't raly you, Peggy," he says; "are you sure?
Because, if ye are," says he, "open the dure
And bring me o' sperrits the lastest wee drap,
But watch wi' the water in turnin' the tap.
The addin' o' water to sperrits for me,
It needs to be done wi' disarnin'," says he.

Tho' Peggy refus'd to come doon to the shap
At last she consinted to fetch him a drap,
Let it doon in a jug at the end o' a string,
He warnin' her aye how important a thing
It is to be carefu' with water if you
Hae any reducin' o' sperrits to do.
He finished the jorum and startin' once mair,
Kept true to his coorse to the breadth o' a hair,
For, bein' noo drunk, and no' fuddled a wee,
The need was for Providence actin' ye see;
Sae Providence guarded him safe ow'r the moor,
And landed him safe at his ain front dure.

But did Providence think o't to keep him awa'
Frae any attentions o' Misthress M'Wha!

Ha' ever ye, anywhere, heerd o' or read
O' Providence puttin' a man to his bed?
Na! that's the defeck,
That's whaur it's slack.
'Twill see ye, drunk, hame, safe and soon' as a bell,
But damage and consequence, that's for yersel'.
If ye fa' thro' a muckle big windy o' glass
'Twill mak' it as safe as a rowl on the grass,
But tho' ye escape withoot scratch to your shins,
Ye p'y for the breakage, ye p'y for your sins.
And sae, in this instance, wi' Misther M'Wha,
Tho' Providence kept him frae ever a fa'
And saw him safe hame wi' his back to the wa',
It drappit him there just to fend for himsel'
Wi' consequence no' very hard to foretell.
Instead o' bein' carefu' and dukin' * his wife,
And slippin' in saftly like fear'd o' his life,
He thought, silly man, he was back at M'Neill's,
And hammer'd awa at the dure wi' his heels,
Threw gravel and dirt at the windy above,
And holler'd and shouted for Peggy his love,
To let doon the jug and to see it was fu',
And see that the water was scarce in the brew.
Mind ye, this at the windy o' Misthress M'Wha,
The one that he should ha' avoided o' a'.

Noo had she been sleepin' the shouts and the raps
Would, sartin, ha' broken the soondest o' naps.
But the Misthress M'Wha
Wasna sleepin' ava'.
'Deed, troth, she was waukin' and waitin' for him,
And lookin', I tell ye, oncommonly grim;
And since he was beggin' a jugfu' she thought
It wad be a kindness to gie what he sought.

* Ducking, to avoid.

This hoose o' M'Wha's, I wad hae ye to ken,
It isn't a common farmhoose o' the glen.
If ye're veesitin' here
There's everythin' near
In the way o' convanience for weshin' your face,
There's towels and water and a' in their place,
And sape in your room—a dacent big lump,
Ye hae nae occasion to gang to the pump.

Noo the room whaur the mistress was lyin' that night
Was furnish'd—a maist splendiferous sight,
There was a wee table wi' marble atap,
That must ha' cost dear at the furniture shap.
It look'd like an altar, imposin' and grand,
And on it, diposit just there to your hand,
Alang wi' scent-bottles and tooth-pooder mugs,
Twa basins and water in heavy, big jugs:
And sae when the mistress was deev'd wi' the din,
And saw siccan state that the maister was in,
And heard him to beg
For a jugfu' frae Peg,
While he gap'd at the windy wi' wide-open mou',
She gave him a jug—I should say a jug-fu'.

Sic spluttrin' and spuein' and spittin' it oot,
Sic freedom in usin' o' langwidge to boot:
And "Woman," he says, "Peggy, woman," says he,
"Ye've droon'd the drap sperrits and nearly droon'd me.
And didn't I tell ye," says he, "to forbear
Wi' water? and this is the way ye tak' care.
I wish I was near ye and pu'in' your lug,
Awa' and get ready anither wee jug,
And let it doon canny, my woman, and quick,
The water I've swallow'd has made me feel sick."

Just then what he ax'd for cam' doon on his head,
A gift, no' frae Peggy, 'twas Sarah's instead;
Poor Peg, she was miles awa', sleepin' in bed.
The misthress's aim wi' the water was true,
And Misther M'Wha had anither jug-fu'.

Ye mind ye o' Aaron—I'm sure ye have heerd
Hoo the ile tumbled doon frae his head to his beard,
And hoo it continued still doonwards to go,
And doon to the skirts o' his garments did flow.
Weel, the water did that wi' poor Misther M'Wha,
(I suppose it's accordin' to gravity's law).
It flow'd frae his hair doon the back o' his neck,
It wander'd, meander'd aboot in the dark,
Until it had soak'd to the tails o' his sark.
The drenchin', I think, had a soothin' effeck,
For straight to the dinin'-room windy he crept,
And a'most before he could lie doon, he slept.

He woke aboot sunrise, he heard the dogs bark,
Aboon him he heard the sweet song o' the lark,
The bird that the Lord has made king o' the air.
(O sure it's the bird He has blest wi' His love!
If ever I win to the heaven above,
I'll look for its angel, it's sure to be there.)
Straight up, perpendickler, he managed to get,
He thought it was rain that had made him sae wet;
Went into the hoose, and then tried his wife's dure,
But couldn't get in—she had lock'd it secure.
Sae he cried thro' the keyhole, "Up, Sarah, my lass,
It has rained in the night, 'twill be grand for the grass."

Sae silly the man, and he an Esq-u.,
His deegnity suffer'd, I'm thinkin'—don't you?

VII

THE WINDS AND THE SEA

"GREAT are the sea and the heaven," and great is the wind that moves between them. Memories for glen folk are largely memories of wind and water, and the sounding of these mingles with the recalled voices, the laughter and the crying of old times. Long years and half a globe may lie between them and the days and places of childhood, yet always does the swirl of a wet night bring back the sound of raindrops from a wind-swept eave on Antrim hills or shore, and a warm breath of Spring in a far country can carry the whin-scent in a land where there are no whins. And a breaking wave anywhere has power to call back the green sea, the angry sea, the bright sea, the black, heaving sea lit by a lighthouse beam, the

> "Awful pitiless sea
> With all its terror and mystery,
> The dim dark sea"

that was seen by the eye of childhood.

Some are brutalised by the great living water, many may be refined. To live on it, to be buffetted by it, to fight with it as with a giant, treacherous and relentless, does make some to be pitiless and cruel. But to others, and the many, the vast and mighty water that wraps the whole world round, the sea that never rests, that never has rested since God gathered together the waters, with its unexplored oceans, its

unfathomed depths and unknown inhabitants, its spells, mysteries, and tragedies, the sea is teacher and refiner. Those who know it, and who hear the sound of many waters when their ears are open to echoes of the past, will not long be absent from it, and, removed from it, they crave for its sight and breath as the thirsty soul longs for cool water. Winds and sea are of the things not to be tempered or controlled. There is no empire of the air to be held by man, and supremacy at sea is only a supremacy of men over men, the ships are broken when the great sea rises. Man may change the mountain—he may, indeed, remove it altogether; there is little on earth he cannot change—but the sea defies him and his works, and remains the one thing that is the same from the beginning until now.

For this rhymer the winds are no insentient gases of varying temperatures moving at varying speeds in different directions. They are personalities with their likes and dislikes. They work, play, rest, are gay, cheerful, angry, or sad; they do things of set purpose, for fun or out of malice. When young Mrs. M'Manus is going along the road under a new hat—a miraculous (and exceeding great) confection of wire, velvet, and ostrich plumes—and the north wind "whips" it off and lands it with a bold sweep in Widow M'Ilvenny's back close, it is no simple effect of air in motion deflected, or of air compressed against a gable, it is a little practical joke of the conscious north wind. But, as he is good-natured, he takes care to land the hat on a bed of clean peat culm at the foot of the stack, but just near enough to a pool of stagnant green water and a pig of inquiring turn of mind to make the heart of Mrs. M'Manus "jump into her mouth." And the south wind looks with interest after Pat's garden, wandering in and out of the orchard, groping about the roots of the apple trees for the sleeping daffodils, telling them what o'clock it is, and helping them to rise. In Spring, even in the time when the east has it nearly all her own way,

south is ever trying to edge in with a puff to help the primroses.

Nor is the sea, with its majesty like that of eternity, a dead thing. It has its moods and tempers, it fights or gambols, blesses or curses, it changes its garb at pleasure. From it the fishermen draw such fish as townsman never heard of—gnoud, blocken, lithe, flounder, and a host of others, though when he, the townsman, has learned that a parten is a green crab and a crubin a red one, a silch a seal, and a herring hog a porpoise, he may begin to think that possibly the strange fish are the old familiar ones under new names.

There may be times when the glen dweller thinks he has more than enough of wind and sea, but generally and at all times of the year, he who has lived with the great powers wants to be with them. Specially is their company delightful in Spring, on such a day and with such accidents and surroundings as the rhymer has detailed in some of his verses on country life. Then, out in the clean-harrowed, new-sown, undulating fields, full of a promise which is sweeter than fruition, with everything on the way to, which is to have more joy than that which follows arrival, honoured by the trust of seagull and crow that tread on his heels, and are not afraid, getting glances full of modest confidence from the big, innocent eyes of maiden primroses, the rhymer would not change places with any man be he pope or potentate, would not be younger or older, or richer or poorer, not any body or thing other than he is—Pat M'Carty, farmer of Antrim—on

"A sunny, windy day in Spring."

WHAT THE WIND DOES

It bothers bees bummin' roon',
Pushes auld weemin doon,
Touzles the weans' heids and plucks craws' wings.
It clips, claps, clatters,
Tears things to tatters,
It races, rampages, it whustles and sings.

It lifts duds dryin',
Sends them aff flyin',
Twists things and breaks things and mak's things fa';
It taks a guid bonnet
And leaves naethin' on it;
Hates the sicht o' silk hats and flings them awa'.

It strips aff the trees' claes,
Havoc wi' corn plays,
Rowls over haystacks by dizzens and scores,
It chirps, squeaks, flutters,
Flaps window-shutters,
Pu's thatch and slates aff and bangs barn-doors.

It worries a' Christendom,
Blows reek doon the lum,
Chokes, pumps, flabbergasts, plays deil's tricks.
It strikes hard and cuts keen,
Throws dust in folk's een,
Bumps, thumps, tarrifies, gies us oor licks.*

* To give one his licks is to give him a good drubbing.

HOW DOES THE WIND BLOW?

How does the wind blow?
North it is, neighbour.
This day a man's a man
Fit for his labour.
Listen! what noise it makes,
Hear the lum roaring,
That's a Goliath wind
Puffing and snoring.
Over a thousand leagues,
Singing, it courses,
Raising the white manes
O' the sea-horses.
Sure it's the breath o' life
Into ye blowing,
Sending the red blood
Pulsing and flowing.
Troth, and a windy day
Is to my liking.
I feel like Nimrod,
Or an ould Viking.

How does the wind blow?
East it is, biting,
Cutting to marrow-bones,
Shrivelling, blighting.
Look at the face o' me,
Spotted like measles;
That wind has edge on't
Fit to shave weasels.
Cowld do ye say it is?
East's always chilling,
Cowld's just no name for it,
'Deed, and its killing.

Doesn't the peat-fire
Draw ye and charm ye?
Though ye might sit on it
Ere it would warm ye.
There's Brown's sheep again
Into my clover,
I'll have the law on him
Ere the month's over.
Never for me were
Sarvints so lazy,
Me wi' the toothache
Driving me crazy.
Things are atwist the day
Crooked, uncivil,
'Deed, I can well believe
That there's a divil.
There's half the roof aff
Byre and the dairy,
And that ould cow sick.
Things *is* contrairy.

How does the wind blow?
West it is, rumbling;
West wi' a growl in it
Like a dog grumbling.
Wish I knew what to do,
Weather allowing.
I should have horses out,
I should be ploughing.
Folk wi' prophetic joints
Like Betty Martin,
They can foretell things;
Here I'm unsartin.
Is it a gentle blow,
Kind o' saft duster?

Or does a storm come,
Regular buster?
Life is a queer thing,
Troubles and sneezing,
Come like the west wind
At their ain pleasing.
Here do we sit the day,
Gone we're to-morrow,
One day blithe o' heart,
Next day in sorrow.
Skies are as black as pot,
Clouds do not scatter,
That last windy gust,
Smelt o' rain water.

How does the wind blow?
South, saftly singing
Sangs o' the bright time
She'll be soon bringing.
South wind is kindly,
Loving and giving,
Springtime is heartsome,
Life is worth living.
Trees stand nae langer
Bare in sic grim rows,
Under a hedge I
Found a new primrose;
Somehow it made me
Think of wee Jennie,
Always I thought her
Fairest o' any.
Jen' has a bonnie face
(Beauty *does* matter),
Saft touzled black hair,
Eyes like deep water.

She's no big talker,
Not the loud-mouth kind.
Jen' has a sweet voice,
Low like the south wind.
He that will ax her—
Troth he will do well,
Jennie's a sweet girl,
Jennie's a jewel.

THE FOUR WINDS OF HEAVEN

The North's a man o' iron frame,
A red-fac'd, grey-hair'd, hale ould blade;
He likes to tramp the fields in spring,
And break the clods the frost has made.
He doesn't whustle like the Wast,
And where he goes won't tarry lang,
But sings wi' glad and hearty voice,
A rumblin', roarin', rantin' sang;
He shakes the chimlies, lifts the thatch,
Blaws up the lassies' claes behind;
And when they turn he smacks their cheeks—
He may be coorse,—he's no' onkind.

The South's a lady. In her arms
She carries store o' bonnie flow'rs;
She plants them in the fields and glen,
And waters them wi' gentle show'rs.
For her the hedges dress in white,
For her the blushin' daisies spring,
And when they hear her liltin' voice
The little birds begin to sing.
The sleepy praties rub their eyes,
When through the clods she speaks to them;
Then hurry on their jackets new,
And up and cry, "God bless you, ma'am!"

The East's a woman—bitter, bad,
  Hated and scorn'd where'er she goes;
A woman troubled wi' the cowld,
  Aye wipin' at her thin red nose.
It's sair to see her ugly tracks,
  When roon' the hoose at night she walks—
A wee bit chicken lyin' deid,
  A wheen o' blacken'd pratie stalks.
The lamb that yesterday was born,
  Puir wee onsteady-leggit beast,
She kicks and kills beside its dam,
  The devil's dochter is the East.

The Wast's a man. His lang red beard
  Is wat as ever wat can be;
Doon frae the hills he tramps at night,
  And like a piper whustles he.
He has nae judgment in his wark—
  Which is to gie the plants their drap;
And whiles he'll droon your standin' corn,
  Or wash away yer pratie crap.
He's just a lazy lumbrin' lout;
  He's no ill-natur'd—that he's not;
And wud be likit weel if he
  Were carefu' wi' his waterin'-pot.

THE SEA

Morning

The tide is in, the sea's a-rest. On far-off Scottish hills
Is herald o' the rising sun, a cold light, dim and grey.
See! now he comes, the King himself, and ev'ry inlet fills
Wi' glowing, dancing, golden light, the new light o' the day.

The wind is no' awake as yet from slumbers o' the night,
The sails lie flat against the masts, clear mirror'd in the bay,
And tiny baby wavelets are playing wi' the light
That falls upon a smiling sea at breaking o' the day.

Noon

Thro' spray that glints like di'monds bright the glad boats gaily go,
The sails are wet, the coorses set, the wind is blowing strang;
It is the time for labour now, the tide must ebb and flow,
And wind and sea and sailor join wi' gladness in a sang.

Like madden'd wild racehorses the white man'd billows fly,
The tide that ebb'd must flow again, and ere the night grows dark
Fu' many a mile o' golden sand and rocky shore must lie
Under the green and rolling wave—the busy sea's at wark.

Night

The sun's awa' to ither lands, the far lands o' the west,
And night o'er land and rock and sea her veil o' black has spread,
The silver moon, her journey done, has tirèd sunk to rest,
And sleepy stars are winking from the dark sky overhead.

Lang since the wind has ceas'd to chase the clouds across the sky,
And hameward, slow, wi' flapping sails, the laden vessels creep;
And a plash from far off sandy shores sounds like a restfu' sigh
From the gently heaving bosom o' the mighty sea,—asleep.

VIII

FLOWERS OF THE GARDEN

The garden is very full, if not very large. There is a long yard-wide border in front of the house with old bushes of southern-wood, hollyhocks that come up year after year with unabated vigour, and great clumps of Dielytra, locally known as the Bleeding Heart. This border joins the garden proper, which is here of narrow dimensions, passing the gable of the house and the end of the close or open space in front of the door, and divided from the orchard by a thorn hedge. After the close corner is passed, the garden widens out into an irregular triangle on the orchard slope with the lowest point near the old well already described. The entrance to it is by a little iron gate at the end of the close, and its path is the nearest way to the well if you start from the front door. At one time the hedge completely enclosed the triangle, but partly because the thorn did not thrive in the shade of the apple trees, and partly because of traffic to the well, it has now disappeared at the lower point, and here with charming effect the garden merges into orchard. By the well overflow Pat has planted lily of the valley and blue irises—the yellow wild iris, wood sorrel, ferns and other beautiful things came of themselves and were made welcome. Here too are the best of the daffodils, and under the hedgerow which divides orchard and garden from field is a colony of wood hyacinths.

Not all the garden is for flowers. Ascending from the

well the triangle to the right, open to the sun, is given up to vegetables and the gooseberry and currant bushes which line the paths. At the top, when you reach the narrow part which passes the close-end, you are back in flower-land pure and simple. Here the space is divided after the old fashion into small boxwood-bordered beds, and, excepting in the later-made bairn's garden under the gable, the boxwood is a great deal higher than is liked by fashionable gardeners. But Pat has long ago discovered that much of a garden's sweetness is due to the boxwood, and whether the June sun draws more perfume from it than from the pinks is a question he has not been able to settle. With a hankering after things that belong to the days of our fathers and the old time before them, he has clipped a yew into a tapering succession of mill-stones crowned by the lordly peacock. And as a clipped peacock of yew is not at home without a sun-dial, he has set up a pillar with a slate slab, carved by a handy mason after a pattern found in an old book where the "s's" are like "f's." The double lilac primroses flourish in the shade of the tall boxwood, their heads so much too heavy for the slender stems that they do not try to sit up, but loll, lazy fashion, in the luxuriant leafage. There is no country garden complete without a flowering currant, and so there is one here by the gate of entry. On the other side it is balanced by a giant fuchsia, the ten-foot-high child of a plant still growing out of the stone fencing of an untidy, unkempt farm haggard in Islandmagee, and covered in summer like its offspring with countless thousands of crimson-scarlet bells. There are dahlias, the old double unfashionable kinds, crimson and yellow, that are not coddled by lifting when the cold weather comes, but sleep out bravely through the winter with but a shovelful of stable litter for protection. Withal they can produce flowers that can put nursery specimens to shame, but then, flowers are like humankind and are glad to give much and be content with little where there is love for them.

The wallflowers, too, know that they are not to be pulled up and thrown on the rubbish heap after their spring effort, and so they make return by blooming in some fashion nearly the whole year through, and rearing healthy young families round them to take their places when it is time to go the way of all life, plant or animal. There are pinks, white and red daisies, blush roses, moss roses, damask roses and cabbage roses, groves of mint and apple balm, and with its own boxwood bordered square in the centre of all the gay things and sweet things and not ashamed—a bed of parsley.

Outside the garden, at the back of the close and at the top of the triangle where are the vegetables and the gooseberries, is a planting of which Pat is not a little proud. Seven or eight years ago the space it occupies was a whinny knowe, the bare rock showing through in half-a-dozen places. A willow rod, stuck into the ground as support for a garden waif, grew rapidly, and Pat, seeing this, cut a number and planted what speedily became a waving grove of willow. Then a golden elder was set in the lower part of the space immediately behind the garden hedge. In the time of a former owner of the cottage, less particular about appearances than the present, there was a midden here, and the spot suited the elder admirably. In four or five years it smothered the hedge in front, and sent long leafy messengers down the garden slope, appearing in the glory of its summer dress as a great rolling cloud of gold. Then the rocks behind were blasted, earth was carted to the spot, and behind the elder were planted two little groves each of half-a-dozen trees, one of silver poplar and the other of *Prunus Pissardii* and copper beech. All have done well, and now the sight of them in early summer is, in Pat's estimation, one of the things that make life worth living. One of the best points from which to see this colour effect is the garden foot near the well. There, looking uphill, the arching branches of the apple trees frame a picture of living red, gold and silver, at which the planter gazes with never lessen-

ing delight. Always there is breeze enough to turn up the silvery undersides of the poplar leaves, and move the billowy skirts of the elder in graceful sweeps. The wife of the planter says that her husband's head has got a permanent tilt backwards by long looking at his loved plantation. Allowing large discount, the playful statement may serve as a measure of the delight this plant-lover derives from his hill-top.

Prunus Pissardii is not common in this country; as a matter of fact these few trees are the only ones in the district, and Pat found them where he found his sweetheart—at Dumfries. Their purchase led to the annual sending of a catalogue by the nursery owners. Catalogues have a way of attracting catalogues; and without being able exactly to explain how they find him, Pat sees now half-a-dozen arrivals every spring and autumn. If the reader of this story has no garden, and no special love for plant-life, it is useless to try to make him understand the delight of a nursery catalogue. If, on the other hand, he loves plants and has a garden, and especially a garden with light and shade and soils and aspects, then it is needless to say anything to *him* on the subject. He knows how catalogues come and accumulate, and overflow their appointed corner on the shelf, and how his wife brings them to him from time to time asking if he "wants" them, thereby indicating that she thinks the waste-paper basket the proper place for them. He knows the joy of dipping into the last new one here and there, reserving the full examination for a leisure happy hour; knows how, as he reads, the rare rock-plant from the Caucasus becomes a sheet of bloom on *his* garden wall, and how the North American bog-lover fits into just the very place for it in *his* garden. And Pat knows all these things.

He has sent for some of these interesting foreigners, has known the delight of expectancy, the pleasures of the arrival, of the unwrapping and the unrolling, of the preparation of

the soil, and the planting and watering and watching of the newcomer. Sometimes these strangers have made themselves at home with him, and have flourished amazingly, and sometimes they have pined and dwined (a good north-country word) and wished themselves back to the Caucasus.

But when it comes to rhyming, it is only the old home flowers that inspire the music. The sight and scent of the new flowers have not the heart-stirring power of the old wallflower and the damask rose. When Pat was a grown man he had in a book the pressed leaves of a Rose of Sharon, given to him when he was a child, and which he, with a child's faith, had accepted as the veritable rose of Judah's fields. And what pictures of the Holy Land he saw, by the aid of those dried golden petals. Song and picture, for the Antrim man, are only in the old flowers. He can pen lines to a hollyhock, but not to *Eremurus robustus;* and if he should write a sonnet to *Onosma Taurica,* people would ask of him "Who was she?"

ROSE OF SHARON

Rose, Rose o' Sharon fair, when, years ago,
A bairn, I first your golden petals saw,
Wi' strange delight and love I watch'd you grow,
And gather'd o' the bloom amaist wi' awe.
For you were written o' in Haily Book,
Within its leaves your leaves o' gold I hid,
And when I turn'd its page at you to look
The scenes o' Sharon's land I walk'd amid.
Your silky petal made the picture glow
Wi' sheen o' silken garments dy'd at Tyre,
Your gold the beaten gold o' shields did show
In house at Lebanon, that shone like fire.
Your name brought vision o' an Eastern clime,
O' distant, sunny skies for ever blue,

O' Judah's beauty in the ancient time,
O' Solomon, the king, wha sang o' you.
I thought how he, in majesty array'd,
Wi' wealth and wisdom and his glories a',
Could write o' cedar by the forest glade,
And plant that grows in crevice o' the wa'.
You brought the treasures o' the far lands near,
The myrrh, the frankincense and precious things,
Slow brought by caravan through deserts drear
To glorious make the palaces o' kings.
You painted for my een the vision bright
O' angels comin' in the clouds to sing,
O' shepherds watchin' o' their flocks by night,
O' Him the greater then the earthly king.
I dream'd He sought you, mither-led afield,
To make sweet posies in His childhood's days.
Believ'd, in aifter time, His work reveal'd,
You cheer'd the Man o' Sorrows by the ways.
Rose here "O' Sharon" nam'd, though but in name,
Flow'r o' the East and bairn's imagining,
Yet still your magic is to me the same,
Aye will your golden head the pictures bring.

WALLFLOWER

O FLOWER o' Spring, my heart's delight,
Ye surely hae a perfect right,
The wizard's power to claim;
Tho' I in ither lands may be,
The scent o' you can mak' me see
The wee thatch'd hoose at hame.
One scent—your ain rich dress is seen,
Blood-red or goolden ower green,
As fair as ever grew;

I see the daisies at your feet,
And lilac primroses sae sweet,
That companied wi' you;
I see the whitewash'd wall behind,
The window wi' the muslin blind,
The low, half-open door;
In thocht I step inside and see
The big airm-chair set out for me,
The clean, well-sweepit floor;
The clock, a gift of auld grandsire,
The dog asleep before the fire,
The bleezin' fire o' peat;
I see the wife, sae busy she,
Sae ready wi' a smile for me,
And aye sae clean and neat.
O, dear's the spot where life began,
And deep within the heart o' man,
Its treasur'd picture lies;
When hame and we are far apart,
A wallflower's scent has magic art
To paint it for our eyes.

HOLLYHOCK

Tall, stately, wi' an auld-warld grace,
And wi' that courtly air
That gangs wi' patches on the face
And powder in the hair,
Like dame that walked sedate and slow,
Or glided in the dance
In ancient times, lang, lang ago,
At some auld court o' France.
A beauty, beautified by Art,
Possess'd o' golden store,

And yet wi' lowliness o' heart,
That made her seek the poor:
Sae that, in spite o' envied lot,
High birth and noble name,
Within the poorest peasant's cot
She seem'd to be at hame.
I've seen ye in the gay parterre,
Where proud geraniums flam'd;
Your calm and stately presence there
Made ither flow'rs asham'd.
I've seen ye stand, majestic, tall,
Hedg'd roon' about wi' green.
Wi' background o' a castle wall,
And there ye reign'd a queen.
And yet ye hae sae lov'd the poor,
That, in your glory drest,
You stand fu' oft at cottage door,
And there I like you best.
O noble plant wi' glorious dow'r,
O' wealth that can't be hid,
God might ha' made a fairer flow'r—
I'm sure He never did.

ROSE

O WHA shall be queen,
The ruler serene,
O' garden and ev'ry sweet flow'ret that grows?
Say how shall I find
This best o' her kind?
For many a flow'r in my garden that blows,
Has scent for the air,
Or form that is fair,
Or colour that bright as a flame o' fire glows.

I've found a' the three
At last, rose, in thee,
Sweet rosebud, just waitin' sun's kiss to unclose.
Wi' form, colour, scent,
In one blossom blent,
Ye shall be queen o' them, beautiful rose.

SUNFLOWER

Ye auld muckle plate o' fire wi' bleezes roon' the brim,
Was't lookin' at the sun sae lang that made ye grow like him?

Ye've copied weel his face and form—ye've climbit purty high,
It's no' for want o' wish or will ye hav'na reach'd the sky.

Ye're watchin' for him in the east before the day's begun,
Ye're glow'rin' at him in the wast at night when he has done.

Ye auld muckle plate o' fire wi' bleezes roon' the brim,
It's lookin' at the sun sae lang has made ye grow like him.

LILY OF THE VALLEY

My garden has a shady place
Near by the well.
The lily o' the valley there
Has come to dwell.
Behind her rises mossy bank
And velvet sward,

Wi' soft-ey'd primrose in the Spring
Right gaily starr'd.
There, thickest by the hidden stream
Where well o'erflows,
Her trinity o' pale green leaves
The sorrel shows.
There live sweet violets, and hosts
O' blossoms sma',
'Twould tak' a botanist wi' books
To name them a'.
And ow'r the lowly blossoms wave
The kindly ferns,
Like lovin' mithers stretchin' airms
To shelter bairns.
There, where the labour'd garden ends,
'Twixt wild and tame,
My lily o' the valley fair
Has made her hame.

Wi' her nae form majestic, high,
Invites the gaze,
Nae colour cryin' in the sun
Seeks for your praise.
Ye maun bend low ow'r guardian leaves,
And seek wi' care
To find this shy, sweet, modest flow'r,
My lily fair.
The gracefu' stalk sae delicate,
A' set wi' bells,
That ring oot fragrance on the air
As music swells.
We'd like ye, lily, though ye sought,
Wi' height or hue,
To adverteese as ither blooms,
But 'tis wi' you

As wi' the guid o' human kind,
Guidness that's fair,
Concealment mak's it fairer still,
And lov'd the mair.

I love them a', the bonnie flow'rs,
Unnam'd or nam'd,
Wild in the forest, muir, or field,
Or garden tam'd.
My heart has chambers big enough
To hold them a',
Aye, e'en the dandelion rough,
Whase beauty's sma'
And wha, aye, in forbidden pairts
Ye're like to find,
I love the ragged rascal tho'
He's hard to bind.
But for a few my heart o' hearts
Hauds inner shrine,
And in it aye, my lily fair,
A place is thine.

IX

FLOWERS OF THE FIELD

THE lane that wanders through the fields and ends against the hill-foot is the nearest way from the high road to a few little semi-cultivated patches of mountain land hardly worthy to be called farms. The lowest and best of these is known as Sam Turley's, although Sam resigned all property in it in favour of his son-in-law nearly fifteen years ago. Sam is a very old man; in the language of the country "he will never see ninety again." Years and rheumatism have bent him so that he walks now like the letter L turned upside down, but his face is not old nor his mental strength abated. If you meet him on the road, it is the full round disc of the Tam-o'-Shanter that is seen approaching, but when a step is heard and the old man throws back his head the face is striking enough to make a stranger stop. The delicate refined features tell of trouble bravely borne, of long-continued plain living and high thinking. His is

> ". . . the clear transparent skin
> That shows the spirit's light within."

Long ago he had wife and sons and daughters, but death came and gathered them one by one—all but the youngest daughter. When she married, her father did that dangerous thing—he made over his farm and all his belongings to his child and her husband. In this case, however, the trust has been justified, and the gift, made by the father at a time

when he was nearly heart-broken by the loss of the last son, has never been regretted.

Notwithstanding the great difference in their ages, Pat and Sam Turley are close companions. Relieved from the cares of farming, the old man divides his time nearly equally between the house of his child and that of his friend, and it must be a wild day of winter that does not see him more than once up and down that rough cart-track through the fields. As he goes there are frequent departures from the straight path, and the iron-shod staff is busy nearly all the time in raising ferns, mosses, and the wild flowers of the glen. These will be replanted with the aid of the stick that raised them, mostly in the garden of his friend, for his own on the mountain side is too bare and exposed for experiments in floriculture. One of these experiments, hitherto unsuccessful, has been the planting of the wild pansy among garden varieties in the hope of securing a new and mixed type. The old man has a keen eye for variegations, sports, or peculiar growths, and in his search for these he has more than once discovered species not previously known to exist in the country. But if he robs glen and field of a few things that he may observe them at his ease in a garden, he has restored to wild nature by more than a hundred-fold. The ripening stalks of foxgloves are carefully gathered, and the seeds in countless thousands are sown on the glen banks by the tumbling river. "With God's blessing, Pat, that will be a grand sight when they flower" is a word the younger man has heard many a time when he has been taken to see the results of the old man's work. That labour of love has made the wilderness blossom, and filled the wild of bramble, bracken, and whin with patches of poppies, primroses, and forget-me-not. The yellow toad-flax, brought from a garden at a distance, can now take care of itself, and the rarer ferns collected over a wide area flourish in many a damp and sheltered nook under the dripping rocks.

Love of plant life is one bond between the old man and the younger, but only one of many. Not a great reader of books, Sam has nevertheless in thought traversed the infinite, has observed, thought, and theorised so that converse with his mind gives that "sense of largishness and space" which Pat claims in a humorous rhyme as a characteristic of Cushendun. There are minds like the front gardens of the houses in city streets—full, empty, weedy, or well kept, the boundary line is easily reached. There are others again like the ample stretches of an old-time pleasaunce with possibilities of discovery at every turn, and with a background of trees under whose branches is caught a glimpse of distant blue hills and a golden heaven beyond. Such is the mind of this simple old countryman. There is little in his garb or surroundings to recall the monkish cell, nevertheless he is the original of the loved Friar John, strong, simple, and gentle, with the gentleness of the man who has attained to a knowledge of his ignorance—who knows what he does not know.

FLOWERS OF THE FOREST AND THE FIELD

Oh, if we only knew it,
They're very like oorsels,
The daisy o' the mountain,
The primrose o' the dells,
The ragged dandelion—
Auld beggarman o' flow'rs—
The violet and bluebell
That love the shady bow'rs,
And a' the host o' blossoms
O' ev'ry shape and hue,
That paint the dykes and hedges
White, yellow, pink, or blue.

They have their flights o' fancy,
Their hopes and joys and fears,
Hae faces that can gladden,
And een that fill wi' tears.
They differ frae us only
In this, that when they see
The dreeded danger comin'
They canna rise an' flee.
They think o' what has happen'd,
They hope for what's to come,
They talk to one anither
The while we think them dumb.
The wind that speaks in whispers
They hear and understan',
They speak to bird and insect,
To everything but man.
The blithe and soarin' lav'rock
Hauds converse wi' the corn;
The harass'd, hunted lev'ret
Gets warnin' frae the thorn.
But word or thought has never
Passed flow'r and man between,
They gaze at us wi' wonder
And show it in their een,
That man, lord o' creation,
Wi' a' his vaunted pow'rs,
Has never learnt their language,
The language o' the flow'rs.

FLOWERS AND MEN

I THOUGHT me o' the titled great,
O' heroes in the people's eyes;
I thought me o' my low estate,
And wanted sair frae it to rise.

It seem'd sae grand a lord to be,
Wi' palace and wide-spreedin' lands;
Sae ill to be unknown like me,
Wi' twa-three acres and my hands.
But when I thought o' lilies fair
And roses that sae proodly stand,
And richly scent the simmer air,
The titled folk o' flower-land;
And when I saw that walth o' bloom,
The field and moorland's countless host,
A light broke in upon my gloom,
My screed o' discontent was lost.
For one grand lily, rich and rare,
That may in the king's garden grow,
On lonely moor and hill-side bare
A million nameless flow'rets blow;
And tho' they bloom unknown to men,
Each has its ain fit place to fill,
What 'tis we know not,—this we ken,
The Maister maketh naethin' ill.
He will not ask the mountain broom
For scent and colour o' the rose,
Nor frae the dusty wayside bloom
The spotless white the lily shows.
And God, wha made the garden rose,
Has needed just as muckle skill
To mak' the meanest flower that blows
Uncar'd for on the lonely hill.

I'm o' the million—what o' that?
The Maister maketh naethin' ill:
Who made "My lord" made also Pat,
And gave us baith a place to fill.
And in that book the angel keeps,
The count is no' by birth or lands,

Nor by the size o' goolden heaps,
  But by our heed to God's commands.
The poorest o' the sons o' men,
  Whas hame's a hovel damp and drear,
May haud a higher rank up ben
  Than some great man o' title here.
The Maister has the richt to ask
  Ten pun' where He ten pun' has lent;
If He has lent me one, my task
  Is a' the lighter—I'm content.

PRIMROSES

If ye would find a parfit maid
Ye dinna speir aboot the street
Whaur croods o' gigglin' hizzies meet;
That's whaur ye find the rantin' jade.
And pale primroses o' the wood
Are like the lassies that are guid,
Unspotted by the stour o' life,
They dinna love the roadside strife;
For best o' baith ye'll hae to look
In some bit shady, shelter'd nook.

Doon whaur the spreedin' hedges hang
  Their airms oot ow'r the grassy dyke,
Whaur moss is thick and grass is lang,
  Ye find the hame primroses like.
As tall and shapely maids they grow
  In families o' four or five.
I wonder, do they think or no'?
  Are they like Christians a' alive?
Has God not gi'en them sense and mind?
  The sweet pale faces and big eyes
Hae surely got a soul behind,
  They look sae innocent and wise.

THE PINK PRIMROSE

A SWEET wee primrose in the lane
Was one day wi' the fancy ta'en
To see the sea.
She curiositie could feel
And maybe ither things as weel,
Like you and me.
She cran'd her neck aboon the grass
To catch a sight, but caught alas
The North wind's ee—
Daft bodie, he.
Tears, like a runaway, alang,
Aye singin' bits o' some auld sang
And playin' tricks.
His airms went roon' her wi' a rush,
And made the puir wee flow'ret blush,
In sorry fix
She found hersel' wi' sic alairms,
A' touzled wi' his big rough airms,
And as she fled
In fear and dread,
The sun just risin' ow'r the sea,
Saw the wet tear drop in her ee,
And Cupid's dart
Went thro' his heart.
He gently rais'd her droopin' head,
And kissed her cheeks a deeper red;
If ye will seek doon by the mill,
Ye'll find that primrose blushin' still.

BLUEBELLS

YOUR bonnie wee blossoms have won my heart's love,
Dear sweet-scented blossoms o' blue,
For blue is the colour o' heaven above,
And blue is the colour that's true.
As under June beeches and birches I lie
And list to the hum o' the bees,
It seems wi' you nigh that a bit o' blue sky
Has tumbled doon under the trees.

O pleasant and fair are the woods o' the glen,
Sae bonnily carpeted blue,
And sweet are the sounds that are heard in them when
The bluebells are wet wi' the dew.
They say it's the sough o' the ocean that swells
Like music at eve on the breeze.
But no,—it's the sound o' the nodding bluebells,
By fairies rung under the trees.

There's many a flow'r that can perfume the air,
Or brighten the woods wi' its hue,
But never a one is more dainty and fair
Than you my sweet blossom o' blue.
And he who can hear the low sound o' your bells
Will see what nae ither can see,
He'll see the good fairies that live in the dells
A' dancin', gay, under a tree.

THE HOUSE LEEK

A WHEEN o' wee cabbage sat down on my roof,
A wheen o' wee cabbage sae hearty,
And said, when to pu' them I stretch'd out my loof,
"Ye cudn't now, Mr. M'Carty,
Ye wudn't now, Mr. M'Carty."

"I don't want my roof to get bad and decay,
So git out," says I to the party;
But the mother leek cried, as I shov'd them away,
"Ye cudn't now, Mr. M'Carty,
Ye wudn't now, Mr. M'Carty."

She pu'd to the front a young slip o' a leek,
The fattest wee brat o' the party.
"Cud you bear to see tears on his innocent cheek?
Ye cudn't now, Mr. M'Carty,
Ye wudn't now, Mr. M'Carty.

"'Tis us that King David exalts in his Psalms—
Aye fat, and sappy, and hearty;
Ye wudn't evict a puir wife and her lambs?
Ye cudn't now, Mr. M'Carty,
Ye wudn't now, Mr. M'Carty.

"King Solomon wrote o' the plants on the wall;
He, the joodishus ould party;
And you, who're as wise, wudn't hurt us at all:
Ye wudn't now, Mr. M'Carty.
Ye cudn't now, Mr. M'Carty."

And so, wi' her blarney, she's settled the case;
And says, when I threaten her party;
"Ye needn't luk cross, for I know by your face,
Ye cudn't now, Mr. M'Carty,
Ye wudn't now, Mr. M'Carty."

DANDELION

Ye're no' a beauty—'deed ye're not,—
But it's an honest face ye've got,
And so ye'll hae a sang;

I like that braw, big, yellow heid,
Altho' ye're but an ugly weed,
Unless folk ca' ye wrang.
But, weed or no, one thing I ken,
There's muckle ye can teach us men,
Or I am much mista'en.
Ye dinna greet ow'r sair rebuffs,
Ye tak' a thousan' kicks an' cuffs,
And turn up fresh again.
Ye like, nae doot, the best o' soil
(Wha wadna spare unneeded toil?);
But when it can't be had,
Ye mak' the best o' what ye hae,
And grow in mud, or sand, or clay,—
There's naethin' ye count bad.
And e'en to those wha wad ye kill,
Ye bear nae malice nor ill-will—
It's milk that's in your veins.
Revenge ye never tak' for wrang,
Nae thistle-point or poison-stang
That form o' yours contains.
Ye keep maist reg'lar 'oors, they say,
And dinna turn the night to day
By workin' aifter dark,
But shut yer een when sun gaes doon,
And get up when ye hear the soon'
O' early risin' lark.
O dear, auld, ugly, yellow bloom!
I'll never grudge your bit o' room,
For life for you is rough,
And when ye're auld yer heid is grey
Just as my ain will be some day,
If I leeve lang enough.

X

FOWLS OF THE AIR

THE old poets of Antrim, in dealing with the acts and characters of birds and the significance of their appearances, were troubled by no considerations of accuracy of expression. The rhyme had to be attended to first, and if the effort to get it right left the poetry somewhat befogged, they leaned confidently on the intelligence of their hearers and assumed the possession of common sense. Take this for example—

> "The shabby cuckoo
> She lays only two
> And brings them up like a beggarman,
> But the wee chitty wran
> She lays twenty-wan
> And brings them up like a gentleman."

Here it is not stated what the cuckoo and the wren lay, but "any one with any gumption" knows that they lay eggs. It is assumed, too, that most persons know that the objects "brought up" are not the eggs but the birds hatched from the eggs. But even average intelligence fails to grasp the composer's meaning when he deals with the upbringing of the birds. The statement, that the mother of the two young cuckoos brings them up like a beggarman, may mean that each is like half a beggarman, or it may mean that the mother is like a whole one. The like doubt exists as to whether each of the infant wrens is like the twenty-first part

of a gentleman, or whether the conduct of the parent is such that a gentleman need not be ashamed of. With this matter cleared up there are grounds for suspecting that the exigencies of rhyme have influenced the number of eggs laid, or stated to be laid, by the cuckoo and the wren; and alas! the old poet is dead, and we cannot now ask him to produce his natural history notes on which the rhyme is founded. Of magpies he sang—

"One is sorrow,
Two is mirth,
Three a wedding,
Four a birth;"

and varied this at times by fixing the sex of the prognosticated infant thus—

"One is sorrow,
Two is joy,
Three a wedding,
Four a boy."

The bird's name is left out of these ancient rhymes. Signs of modern thought are in a later form—

"To see a lone magpie's oncommonly bad,
Wi' two in a tree-top ye're lucky, bedad;
Three means there'll be marriage most sartinly soon,
And four's a young angel frae heaven straight doon."

Of meteorological observation connected with the fowls of the air there is but one current here in rhyme.

"When the swallow flys high
It's goin' to be dry."

No one in Antrim will kill a robin.

"The robin and the wren,
God Almighty's cock and hen,"

are safe from stone or gunshot. If the starlings come about

your house, be glad that the debit against you in the ledger of the Recording Angel is not heavy, for the starlings (in Antrim) come only near good people. The crows never steal potatoes or grain from the farmer on whose lands they reside. These are some of the people's beliefs about birds and their appearances. Pat's fancies are given below. He associates moods and feelings with the songs and cries of birds. To hear the yellowhammer (locally "-yoyt") is to feel lonely. Its music is, of all, the most plaintive and melancholy. There is winter in a robin's song. The thrush's notes produce the idea of rest, the blackbird's of motion. The cawing of rooks brings pictures of old times, the sparrow's chirp means sunshine. But the song of action and gladness, the inspiriting song, is the one that comes from the sky, the song of the lark, best beloved of all the birds. It is impossible to feel depressed while the ear takes in his glorious song.

TO THE LARK

Little ball o' song and feather
Risin' frae the tufted heather,
Sweetly singin', risin' still,
Till the house, and tree, and hill,
Mountain dark, and cloud o' thunder
Lie below ye. What, I wonder,
Is the charm that up there dwells.
Is't the sound o' silver bells
That in Heaven's streets are ringin'
Tak's ye upward, glad and singin'?
Little speck against the sky,
Up there in the blue so high,
Far aboon earth's woe and sighin',
Can ye see the angels flyin'?

Do the bright wee cherub things—
Only heads and pairs o' wings,
Baby angels, lost to mortals,
Playin' now at Heaven's portals—
Do they let ye join their play?
Tell me what they do and say.
Is your song, sae free frae sadness,
Just a bit o' Heaven's gladness,
Caught when gate was open'd wide
That the lark might peep inside?
Did your cherub playmates kiss ye?
Did they say, "Wee bird, we'll miss ye,
Come again anither day;
Come and sing wi' us and play?"
Is't the cheerin' glimpse o' Heaven
Angel friends to ye hae given
Mak's ye rise, and risin' sing,
Bonnie bird wi' flutt'rin' wing?

Bonnie birdie, brown o' feather,
Often do I wonder whether
God, who made ye rise and sing,
Gave that power o' throat and wing,
That the dullest souls amang us
Might, o'er all the woes that thrang us,
Learn from ye to rise and wait
In the sunshine at His gate.
Leave the scorn o' folks above us,
Faults and slights o' them that love us,
All the little bitin' ills,
Loss that worries, care that kills,
Dread o' what will be to-morrow,
Hill o' danger, cloud o' sorrow,
Far below us, while we soar,
Drinkin' freely more and more

O' the sunny air o' Heaven,
Not one day but a' the seven.
I will think sae. I'll tak' wing,
In the spirit rise and sing;
Kneelin' on the tufted heather,
Praise my God for bonnie weather,
For my wee bit mountain farm,
Health o' mind and strength o' arm,
Wife I love, and frien', and neighbour,
For the sweet red earth I labour,*
For the bird wi' flutt'rin' wings,
And the happy sang he sings.

THE MAVIS AND THE THORN

On the sun-kist breezy hillside risin' upward from the bay,
There's a thorn-bush in a garden by the cot where I was born,
Like the snow or angel-feathers white at blossom-time in May,
And a merry bird the mavis is that's singin' in the thorn.

O the simmer days from ither lands will bonnie birdies bring,
And a gayer coat than mavis wears may some o' them adorn,
But the voice is mair than painted breest or dainty feather'd wing,
And a sweeter sang than mavis sings was never sung in thorn.

I can hear his words o' welcome to the comin' lord o' light,
When he sends across the heavin' sea his messengers o' morn,
And when far awa' ow'r western hills his glory fades in night,
His last farewell is fluted by the mavis in the thorn.

* Used in the north of Ireland in the sense of "to till."

The wind that loves the mavis' notes aft carries them up-
hill,
He chants them ow'r again for me amang the springin'
corn,
And wi' thankfu' heart I listen, then to wark wi' better will,
For the joy that comes o' hearin' from the mavis in the
thorn.

It was God who made the farmer wi' the honest workin'
hand;
It was God who made the fields wherein he grows the
wavin' corn;
And to cheer him in his labour hard He gave him wi' the
land
The merry, speckled mavis and the sweetly-scented thorn.

JENNY WREN

Wi' her wee bit tail sae cockit, and the sparkle in her ee,
She hauds my hairt wi' a' the birds, does Mistress Jenny
Wren;
She pretends to hide amang the leaves, but aye she keeks
at me,
She acts just as the lassies dae, she likes to see the men.

She is in the hedge and oot the hedge as brisk as any bee,
And shows hersel' and hides hersel'—a way the lassies
ken,
For it means baith "Keep yer distance," and it means
"Come, follow me."
She kens the airts that lassies hae that seek the hairts
o' men.

For to shoot the tiny feather-ba' nae man wad ever try;
She has nae need to fash hersel' wi' terror o' the gun,
For fu' forty dizzen o' her wadna mak' a dacent pie—
In weakness there is safety as a lass has aften fun'.*

She is sma' and she is shapely, and her dress is O sae neat,
Sae fittin' and sae modest, for the colour aye is broon,
And below her dainty feathers she will show her dainty feet,
In just the way the lassies dae when walkin' thro' the toon.

O' her voice there is no muckle, for her throat is nae gret size,
It's sweet and saft and cheery, aye a short and pleasant sang,
Ane that never tires the hearer, and the kind a man wad prize
In lass he'd mak' a wife o' and maun listen to for lang.

O Jenny, bonnie birdie, sweet sweetheart Jenny Wren,
That mak's me think o' lassies and their sweet tormentin' ways,
I love ye for the likeness that ye hae to ane I ken,
Ye'll tell her when ye meet her that I'll love her a' my days.

THE CROW

If men hae got their coonterpairts
Amang the birds, the craw
Wi' a' his cuteness and his airts
Is sure the man o' law.
He's got the impudence and cheek
That skill in thievin' brings,
He wears a black coat a' the week—
He's got a lang attorney beak
For pokin' into things.

* Found.

He tak's some interest in lands,
  And talks a kind o' jaw
That nae man leevin' understands,
  Juist like the man o' law.
He looks by or'nar stern and grim,
  He's sartain verra wise,
If ye wad get the best o' him,
  Ye'll early hae to rise.
He'll onconsidher'd trifles nab,
  He knows what's twa and twa,
He loves the gentle game o' grab,
  Juist like the man o' law.
He cocks his heid wi' knowin' look,
  And scans ye wi' his eye,
As if to read ye like a book,
  My faith, the bird is sly.
He gi'es ye help mayhap some days,
  And kills a slug or twa;
But costs ye dear in ither ways,
  Juist like the man o' law.

ROBIN IN THE ROWAN

Robin in the rowan-tree, singin' aye sae gaily,
Winkin' saucily at me as I pass ye daily;
Robin o' the merry ways—heid and tail a-bobbin',
Robin wi' the quaker claes, I will sing ye, Robin.

Summer birds tak' wing and flee when the year's declinin',
Dainty birds that want to see suns for ever shinin';
Robin's wi' us a' the time, like the trusty gowan,
He will seek nae ither clime—he'll keep near the rowan.

Robin on the rowan bough, singin' aye sae cheerie,
Nae fair weather frien' art thou, fleein' when it's drearie;
Tho' the frost and snow be here, tho' the wind be sobbin',
Summer, winter, a' the year, we hae still the robin.

Lucky bird and lucky tree, robin and the rowan,
Baith o' ye I like to see when I'm busy ploughin';
Bird that loves the gaze o' man, bairnies' pet and dearie,
Tree that spoils the witches' ban, sends them tapsalteerie.

Robin in the rowan-tree, sure I love ye dearly,
Weel I ken that ye love me, I can see it clearly—
See your heart wi' love is stirr'd, awmost see it throbbin'
In your breest, my bonnie bird, red-waistcoated robin.

XI

CREEPY-CRAWLY THINGS

In the museums and colleges of Dublin and Belfast these are they of the order of *Hymenoptera* or of *Coleoptera*, or *Orthoptera* or *Lepidoptera*, or of any or all other *ptera* there may be, and in orderly lines with pins through their insides, on fair paper and in glazed cases they display for the benefit of student mankind their endless varieties of eye, leg, wing, proboscis, or other organ. As with the great of human dead there are inscriptions over against them in Latin or Greek, and these inscriptions are like those over the very greatest of the human dead—just the names and nothing more.

But in the glens they have no such honourable names. For the countryman the small fry of creation fall into two great classes, the "insecks" and the "creepy-crawly things." Classification is easy; whatsoever has visible means of support (in the air) is an "inseck," the others are the creepy-crawly things. It matters not that an object may have wings neatly tucked away under elytra—the means are not visible — therefore it is creepy-crawly. A few of the members of both classes have names; there are the wops, the bee, the butterflee, the slater and the ant, the daddy-long-legs, ear-i-wig and flee, the spider and the worm. Flees be it noted are flies, *pulex irritans* in the vernacular rhymes with day, and it and one or two organisms which mankind could possibly have done without are like the

Queen of Spain's legs, subjects of a convention which politely assumes their non-existence. If, as is necessary at times even in the genteelest of families, you must make a reference not unconnected with blankets and entomology, the euphemistic word to be employed is "something." The nature of the reference will be understood by the context.

TO A WORM

I'm feart ye're near relatit to—to him they ca' the ——,
The—*him*—ye ken,—that lives below,—where naethin' can congeal;
A sartin reticence obsarv'd will no' be cause for blame,
He has a way o' crappin' up at mention o' his name.

Your walk is just egsackly like the walkin' o' the ——
(We're no' to mention names I think, it will be just as weel);
Ye rowl upon your stamach low amang the dust I see,
Ye'll recolleck what happen'd aifter Eve had touch'd the tree.

I'm feart ye maun hae dealin's wi'—hae dealin's wi' the ——,
For 'gin the spade cuts ye in twa ye dinna even squeal.
It disna seem to bother ye—it's just a way to breed,
The heid pairt grows anither tail,—the tail anither heid.

I'm feart that pints to dealin's wi'—to dealin's wi' the ——
(The black-complexion'd ane, ye ken—that's shapit like an eel),
For, cut a man or baste in two, they're deid as is daur nail,
But *you*—ye maun hae dealin's wi'—the person wi' a tail.

I'm feart ye share your lodgin's wi'—wi' him they ca' the ——
I'll say nae mair—ye ken the place,—the word is no' genteel;
The hettest day o' simmer-time ye're cauld as winter sea,
And if ye didn't live—beyant, how could that ever be?

Ye sink into the grun' just like—like him they ca' the ——,
The solid arth's nae mair to ye than water to an eel,
The person we've been thinkin' o'—he disappears that way.
I'm feart ye're near relatit to—your uncle, let us say.

DADDY-LONG-LEGS

Faith, Nature was benevolent
  The day she gave you legs,
Six o' them, and sic trollopin',
  Disj'inted kind o' pegs.
They say she never makes mistaks,
  Is never ill-advis'd,
But raly when I see your legs
  I feel a bit surpris'd.
They are sae lang and crook'd and thin,
  Sae numerous and quare;
I never saw the like o' them
  On inseck anywhere.
They were, mayhap, ould stock laid by,
  A prentice bit o' wark;
A dizzen misfits Nature made
  One evenin' in the dark.
And when she built your primal pair,
  And tell't them to increase,
She thocht o' this auld dizzen legs
  And gave them six apiece.

But O if she had had the thocht,
If she had had the wit,
To tak' the scissors in her hand
And clip them short a bit,
You micht ha' been a bummin' clock,
Responsible, refin'd,
Wi' *otium cum*—thingumbob,
You micht—weel never mind.
You have the sense o' your defecks,
And wi' a proper shame
You try to moderate your legs
In lamp or candle flame.
It's dootless wi' the thocht I'd find
Them nourishin' as eggs,
I find, whiles, in my parritch bowl
A couple o' your legs.
Thankin' you kindly a' the same
I here wad stipulate,
Suparflus legs shall be dispoged
Beside, not *on,* my plate.

ODE TO A SLATER *

HAIL to thee, O Slater
(Hail, that is, backwards,
I've no desire to bless ye, not the laste,
Troth, and it's quite the other way about),
Onseemly cratur.

Go hide your heid
(If ye had any dacency
Ye wad tak' a bit walk
In the daylight,

* The wood-louse (*Oniscus murarius*) is, by the country people in Ulster, called slater.

Stretchin' your legs straight-forrard like,
Like a wops or an earwig,
Or any other inseck,
Well-manin' if bothersome at times;
Instead o' that
Ye lie in wait in the dark,
Seekin' what ye may devour,
Under flat bits o' sticks
Or stanes,
The very kind people wad be likely to lift,
And drap again in a hurry
When they see
Your ugly carcase;
Ugh—gru—u!)
Vile centipede.

Ye lout
(Ye onprincipled bein',
What do ye mane
By rowlin' over on your back that way
When you're disturb'd,
Wigglin' about twa thoosan' legs at people
To frighten them,
Without bowels o' marcy!)
Git out.

Ye scalliwag
(There was a leddy that saw ye,
And ses she,
"He's inclin'd to ombinpint," ses she.
Ombinpint, indeed!
Cock ye up wi' ombinpint;
It's fat,
Pure fat,
And pure's not the word for it),
Ye greasy bag.

Ye bag o' guile,
Half pig, half crocodile
(If this wasn't an ode
I'd tell ye what I think o' ye),
Ye thing all vile.

XII

THE POWERS OF DARKNESS*

THE devil is not dead in Antrim. He lives in the language of the people, for no day passes without frequent mention of his name. The herd, narrating how one of the cows indulged in a strange cantrip, says, "she wint aff like the divil." Anything very noisy makes "a row like the divil." A child sent on an urgent message is told to "run like the divil." To do anything "like the divil" is to do it with extraordinary celerity and power.

He materialises, generally in the form of a large black dog, but locally, and not so often of late years as formerly, from which the reader can draw such inference as may seem warranted. Pat well remembers sitting awestruck with his cousins round the fire on the hearth while a staid and sober man, an elder of the kirk, told how he had met the arch-enemy in dog shape on a dark and lonely road, and how, when he stooped to lift a stone, the uncanny one "just seemed to sink into the ground." Years afterwards when Pat, going by night to his father's house, had to pass by a narrow path through a wood, he feared to look to left or right among the trees lest he should see a dog which was not a dog, and to keep himself company and drown the whispers of too active imagination he sang at the top of

* I am indebted to the Rev. S. Arthur Brenan, rector of Cushendun, for access to his notes on the folk-lore of the glen country.—J. S.

his voice snatches of old songs, one of the best remembered being

> "O Nellie Gray
> They have taken you away,
> And I'll never see my darling any more."

An inhabitant of Brablagh saw the evil one in the usual form, and with eyes which he said were like living coals. The dog was standing in a little wood near the road, and the man not caring, he says, "whether it was the divil or not," drew out a large clasp-knife and gave chase. He followed the animal for several hundred yards, when it suddenly vanished. There are many such stories, and it must be confessed, they leave something to desire, exhibiting the devil as a curious mixture of strength and weakness. Why did he who annihilates space, who can assume a body and dissolve it at will, run for even a hundred yards before a man with a clasp-knife? One wonders if *al kohl* the "eye brightener" had not something to do subjectively with the fiery orbs of the pursuer's vision. Other appearances in the glens have been in form of a man, a curly-haired bull, a bear, and a snake-like object with a man's head.

Stories of the fairies are without end, and they are not all old stories. In a county which includes manufacturing Belfast and fashionable Portrush, it is to be expected that the little people will be unequally distributed. Any one expecting to see them in the neighbourhood of spinning-mills or shipbuilding yards will be doomed to disappointment. But in the quiet country of the east and north-east, on the edges of bog and moorland, on the mountains and in the glens, the lonely places where clay-stained proverbs still enshrine a wisdom harvested in fields and underneath the stars, the fairies are as numerous as ever. They dance round fires on the hillsides, vanishing if surprised and approached, and the grass is not blackened where the fire burned. They are given to laughter; many a time does the noise of their

merriment ring in the air, while the merrymakers remain invisible. Fairies of one district may fight with those of another; the clash of arms has sounded all through a night, while the air has been laden with the cries of the wounded, and the stones of the roadside and field have been found in the morning red with blood. They weave at night on cottage looms, and use the smiths' forges. They are the "good people," but if you have offended them by cutting a thorn or building a house on their ground, or even by throwing water over them, they will have their revenge. Gifted with powers greater than any possessed by man, they are nevertheless indebted to him at times. They ask for meal and butter; they need the services of the human midwife. One who was carried away to help a fairy in emergency did not know the character of her employers until, in washing the infant, she touched by accident one of her eyes with the water. Immediately she received fairy sight, and saw things before invisible. She was well treated, and conveyed back to her dwelling. Some time after, near Cushendall, she saw one of the fairy men, a servant who had come for her, and she asked for news of his mistress. "How is it that you see me?" he asked. She replied that in washing the infant she had touched her right eye with the water. The fairy struck at that eye with a riding-whip he had in his hand, and blinded it for ever.

Sometimes the little people amuse themselves, and puzzle the "humans" by acts which can best be described as "larks." Within the last two years I visited, in company of the Rector of the parish, those "curosest o' rocks," the conglomerates of Cushendun. Returning from the caves, a smart shower drove us for shelter into a little cottage in which were a very old couple, a man and a woman, who made us welcome. My friend, who never misses opportunity to increase his knowledge of folk-lore, asked the old couple if fairies had been seen in the neighbourhood lately. The pair seemed unwilling to say anything on the subject, until by a word or two their

interrogator showed that he was not an unbeliever. Then the old man told how he had seen a number of children dancing round a burning whin-bush on the hill in front. He went to chase them away and to chide them for setting fire to the whins, when to his surprise they vanished, and the bush he had seen burning was unconsumed. On leaving the cottage I expressed surprise that my companion should believe in such appearances; his rejoinder was that I should question his housekeeper about fairy doings in his own house. Later in the day I saw the housekeeper, a sober, steady woman, much above the average in intelligence, and, to all appearance, perfectly truthful. She told how, one day, in her presence, the unseen hands of the fairies had lifted out of its socket the crane supporting a large pot of water over the kitchen fire. I went to see the fireplace, which was of the old country sort, with a swinging crane and hooks. To the suggestions that possibly the pot had been, at first, improperly swung on the edge of a hook and had righted itself, or that it had partially rested at first on unburned peat, and slipped when its support had been burned away, the suddenness of the jerk creating the illusion of lifting, the woman replied that she was sure that neither case could account for what she saw. "But," said she, "supposing it did, how would you explain this away? I had a bucket sitting on the floor there, and in my sight, not three yards off, and with no hand or person near, the handle rose from the side against which it was lying and turned over to the other."

The stories of witches are very like those common over the whole of Ireland. A hare or a cat is seen, is suspected of being a witch, is shot with a silver piece, and the witch in human form is afterwards found to be wounded in a part of the body corresponding to that in which cat or hare suffered. One glen story represents the man going straight to a suspected witch's cottage after wounding a suspicious hare. He found the woman at home binding up a bleeding

leg, and she made no attempt to conceal identity, for she said, "I'll pay you up for this." In another case a man was attacked by a vicious filly; he took out a clasp-knife, and drove the beast away, wounding it over the eye, and immediately afterwards the witch of the neighbourhood was found to have a deep cut in the same place.

Stories of the banshee are numerous enough, but I have not yet found any one who has actually seen the sad white woman, or heard her mournful warning. The belief is that the person hearing the banshee cry will die within a year. A boy of fifteen, a fisherman's son, went one evening for the cattle to a distant field. His elder brother concealed himself at a lonely place, and cried in slow wailing tones as the boy passed, "Och onee, puir banshee." In extreme terror the younger lad fled homewards, and flinging himself into his mother's arms wept out, "O mither! she cried it, she cried it."

The old stone-flagged floor, "the clean well-sweepit flure," of Pat's wide kitchen sees many a circle of filled chairs round the hearth-built peat fire in the long winter evenings, and hears many a discussion of men and things and theories. Not infrequently the subject of this chapter has been "before the house." On one of these *Noctes Macartianæ*, the doctor being present, Mrs. M'Carty sneezed, and the act, as is usual in the district, was followed by an ejaculated "God bless you" from some one present. This gave occasion to the doctor to recall the fact that on the westward march of influenza a few years earlier, and while it was yet not nearer than Odessa, the newspapers jestingly spoke of it as an epidemic of sneezing. He told a story he had from a madcap cousin, also a doctor, in New Orleans. It was while the onward movement of the plague was attracting attention, but before it had reached America, that this cousin was one day prescribing for a negress who carried a fine baby girl. The doctor praised the child and asked its name. No name had been given as yet. Could the doctor say one that would be

"berry genteel"? The doctor thought he could, and asked the mother what she thought of "Influenza." The negress was delighted; Influenza Brown had such a distinguished sound, and the doctor assured her it was the latest from Europe. She retired beaming, but her pastor or some friend saved the child from the infliction. Then, remembering what had turned his thoughts to influenza, the glen doctor asked Mrs. M'Carty why a blessing was prayed for a person who sneezed. Mrs. M'Carty thought it was because of a widespread belief that the powers of darkness had greater liberty of action at the moment of a sneeze. She mentioned a story current in the glen country, which tells how the wife of a farmer of Cushleake awoke one night sneezing and found herself being drawn from her bed by fairies. She caught her husband's wrist and managed to hold on, hearing one of the fairies say, "If she sneezes again without saying 'God bless me' she is ours." Some one had heard that St. Gregory enjoined the use of the benediction after a great pestilence in which sneezing was a mortal symptom. Then the doctor, who had been in India, remembered that in one of the sacred books of the Parsees it is enjoined that people should pray for one who sneezes, because sneezing is a proof that the great Spirit of Evil is abroad. Pat's conception of the cause of sneezing, as set forth in the rhyme of the "Devil's Mare," * came to him one day on the flat top of Lurigethan. He thought "What a fine place this would be for a jump to Scotland," then he invented a supernatural beast to make the jump, and called his wife's attention to the marks of the mare's heels. She, however, maintained that the holes were made by the heels of Delargy's ponies.

The story of Johnnie Campbell's Hallowe'en night with the fairies, now done into rhyme for the first time, is one well known in Glenariffe. It is recorded that one Andy Ryan had a nearly similar unpleasant experience,

* Not included in this collection,

JOHNNIE CAMPBELL'S ADVENTURE

HALLOWE'EN was wet the year,
Wet and windy, dark and drear;
Johnnie was a tailor bowld,
Trampin' homeward in the cowld,
Wet and weary trampin' hame—
(Campbell was his ither name)—
And his handkerchief o' blue
Was wi' aipples packit fu',
Rosy-cheek'd and yellow-green
Aipples for his Hallowe'en.

Whistlin' hard to keep up hairt
At the road's maist lonely pairt,
On this windy night and wet,
Sic a crew o' men he met;
Sma'er than o' human race,
Men o' sallow, wizen'd face,
Pechin', gruntin' ohs and ahs,
Bearin' some unholy pack
Like a coffin, lang and black,
And a coffin sure it was.

Johnnie stapp'd in terror sair,
Upright on his heid the hair
Rose at sic an awfu' sight
On that wet and gusty night.
Then he heard the crew discuss
What their burthen black might weigh,
Heard the leader o' them say,
"Wha's to bear the corpse for us?"
Heard, O misery! the cry,
Louder than the wind sae high,
"Wha but Johnnie Campbell's fit?
Johnnie's just the lad for it."

On the tailor's bended back
Straight they strapp'd the coffin black,
Johnnie totter'd, Johnnie stapp'd,
Then his face and hands they slapp'd;
Prick'd his airms wi' needle pins,
Kick'd his bendy tailor shins,
Gi'ed him what was what wi' whins.
On he scrambled wi' his load
Up the wet and muddy road,
Bendin', swayin', wild wi' fright,
In the wind that roarin' night;
Cursit, too, wi' fairy's sight
A' aroon' him he could see
Witches, broomstick-mounted, flee,
Sperrits, colourless and rare,
Wobbled in the gusty air;
Imps were roostin' on the trees,
Demons hopp'd aboot like fleas,
Once he saw the—wheesht—*HIMSEL'*
Pass wi' gust o' sulph'rous smell;
Sae in terror and in pain,
Through the darkness and the rain,
Wrastlin' wi' the stormy blast,
Kill-na-derg was reach'd at last.

On the soakin' clay and weed
Johnnie drappit nearly deid,
While the fairies frae his back
Cut the coffin lang and black;
Then in ring they squatted doon,
He in middle, they aroon',
Squatted and commenc'd to talk,
Drawin' plans o' graves wi' chalk
On the tombstanes at their backs,
Till an imp thocht fit to ax—

Och, the ugly weezen'd knave!—
"Wha's to dig the corpse's grave?"
Then anither wretch replied
Frae his perch, a tomb astride,
"Wha but Johnnie Campbell's fit?
Johnnie's just the lad for it."

Spade they gave him, shovel too,
Tell't him what he had to do,
Order'd grave baith deep and wide,
Stood in rows the pit beside,
Threepin' wi' their voices shrill,
"Deeper, dig it deeper still."
Wet thro' every dud he wore,
Never tailor, sure, before
Found himsel' in sic a plight
On a wild and windy night;
Hounded, hurried, hustled, chid,
In the grave he slipp'd and slid,
Slither'd in the miry clay,
Fear'd to stop or disobey.
If he made a sign to quit,
Or but slacken'd hand a bit,
Doon on him they swoop'd like craws,
Tore his face with teeth and claws,
Whack'd him on the heid wi' whins,
Stuck him in the back wi' pins,
Cryin' still wi' angry threat,
"Deeper, dig it deeper yet."
Water swirl'd aboon his hose,
Water dreepit frae his nose,
Water soak'd him to the sark,
Still he brawly kept at wark;
Dug wi' achin' hand and shin,
Dug wi' pain and cut and wound,
Dug and shovell'd till the ground
Stood a-level wi' his chin.

Then wi' taunt and jeer and hoot
He was cried in accents gruff,
"Oot, ye beggar! that's enough!"—
Johnnie, faintin', scrambled oot.
Then a corpse-like ugly knave
Straight his parable uptook,
Axin' wi' malicious look,
"Wha's to fill this bonnie grave?"
And aboon the wind and rain
Cam' the dreadfu' answer plain,
For the third time came again,
"Wha but Johnnie Campbell's fit?
Johnnie's just the lad for it."

Slaves the tyrant's yoke may spurn,
E'en the trodden worm will turn;
Johnnie, face to face wi' death,
Found his sperrit and his breath;
Wi' the courage o' despair
Loodly cried he then and there,
"Niver, deevils, as your butt
Will I move again a fut;
Niver will I lay my heid
In that grave before I'm deid.
Imps o' Satan, sperrits curst,
I defy ye! Do your worst!"
As he spak' the worried loon
Fumbled in his pocket roon',
Fumbled, aimless, up and doon,
Till he touch'd a thing he had,
Somethin' sma' that made him glad.
'Twas a lucky silver bit,
Crooked, thin, for trade unfit,
Saxpence wi' a hole in it,

Saxpence he had counted loss,
Oot he whupp'd it—made a cross.
Lo! behold ye! at the sign
Panic seized on Satan's kine,
A' the onbaptisit crew
Fled, skedaddled, vanish'd, flew.
Johnnie was alone again
On the road by Ballycrane,
Battlin' wi' the wind and rain,
Thinkin' o' his wife and wean,
Wi' his handkerchief o' blue
Pack'd wi' aipples, tight and fu',
Aipples rosy red and green,
Aipples for his Hallowe'en.

DE'IL'S TRICKS

If on some lonely moor by night
Ye're dand'rin' by the moonbeam's light,
Miles far awa' frae haunts o' men,
The hour a lang way after ten,
A dark man by your side ye fin',
And on the heather taps behin'
Ye hear the whuskin' o' a tail
(Your heart fast thumpin' like a flail),
I dinna need to you to tell,
Ye're wi' the muckle de'il himsel'.

If while ye're cairtin' hame the peat,
The horse is lifted aff his feet,
The cairt is coup'd, and a' the load
Gaes hoppin', jiggin', doon the road,—
A turf across your lug comes whack,
Anither tak's ye on the back,

Anither bangs ye on the croon,
Or what ye sit on, lower doon,
Ye'll ken by tricks like these and squeals
Ye're in the hands o' sarvin' de'ils.

If, seein' no one anywhere,
Ye hear lood laughter in the air;
The chairs jump up, the tables turn,
The yellow butter leaves the churn,
Big, bleezin' fires are on the hill,
Your money changes in the till,
And meal and praties disappear
Withoot a mortial human near,
My worthy frien', you bet your sark
The mischief is the fairies' wark.

If at the time the sun gaes doon
Ye hear a weary, mournfu' soon',
Now sabbin' low, now swellin' high,
A lang, wild, wailin' deathly cry
That dies awa' wi' *Och onee,*
God save ye, frien', it's the banshee.
Frae de'il, the muckle one, himsel',
Frae a' the sarvint imps as well,
Frae fairy sma' and lone banshee,
May you and I presarvit be.

XIII

THE ABBEY TALES

It is rare to find the farmer an archæologist. Commonly, indeed, his attitude to the science of old things is one of antipathy. If you inquire why it should be so, one reason will be found in his division of antiquities into two classes—those which have to do with fairies or spirits, evil or good, and those which have no such association. To the former belong the "moats" or forts common in the country, and, generally, any earthwork of unknown age or use. Any or every misfortune coming to a man or his family after his act of meddling with a tabooed object is set down to the influence of offended spirits or fairies, and as misfortune in some form, at some time, comes to all men, it is never difficult to find the punishment which follows the offence of interference with the property of the unseen powers. On the farm of one of Pat's relatives is a large artificial mound known as "The Moat." The slope on one side is long and gentle—in the opinion of a former owner of the ground it was fit for cultivation. One spring when preparing for crop the field in which the mound stands, he took the ploughshare as far up the slope as the horses could accomplish, and it was noted that within two years the man became insane. It is useless to say to a person who sees retribution in such a disaster, that the man's brain would have given way even if he had left the fairies' ground untouched. He may profess to agree with you, while yet he is resolved that he will neither take the

risk of offending the fairies himself, nor allow others to do anything on his land that might involve him in unpleasant consequences. The natural objection to fences damaged and crops trodden by visitors is, of course, also an element in the farmer's dislike to archæology.

He likes groping in old churches and among tombstones of kirkyards just as little as digging in the ground of fairies. The people who lie below the stones may not like it; ghosts can have grievances, and their manner of airing them is as unpleasant as the hour of their interviews is inconvenient. On the principle that it is wise to use a long spoon when you are supping with the deil, the farmer holds that archæology and its devotees are best kept at a distance.

Where the old-time relic may be handled without fear of ghostly visitation or fairy displeasure, his attitude is generally one of complete indifference. The peat-bog may give up a bronze pot, a dagger, or the stitched leather coat of a very early inhabitant. He will go so far as to say about one of these that it is "cur'ous," or "a lad o' a thing," but he would not think it worth keeping. He has one period for antiquities—the ould times—a period comprehensive enough to embrace every work of man from Adam's days down to those of his own grandfather, and it makes little difference in his appreciation of an object that it belongs to the end, the middle, or the beginning of this period. Remains of old castles are plentiful in the country. Ask about one of them from a farmer who has lived in sight of it all his life, and the chances are that he can tell nothing about its builder or history. He knows it was "a great place in the ould times," that is all.

Pat differs from his fellows in nothing more than this. He cannot remember the time when old things had not for him an overpowering attraction. A ragged volume, with drawings of Assyrian and Egyptian monuments, fell into his hands at a very early age and was eagerly read. Soon he

began to search the country churchyards for old or curious inscriptions, thinking in those early days, with a boy's estimation of the length of years, of anything dated 17— as of remote antiquity. When a grown lad, he read himself up on the plantation of Ulster, and found the tombstones of some of the adventurers with dates early in the seventeenth century. He made copies of the inscriptions on these, and sent them, with connecting remarks and some information as to the state and position of the monuments, to a newspaper of the district, and, rather to the young explorer's astonishment, the copy was accepted and printed. A remark made by a servant in his father's house—the Ann Bradley to whom he has addressed a sonnet—when she heard that Pat had been writing of tombstones two hundred and fifty years old, illustrates the haziness of the country mind where periods of time are in question. "Ye mean awa' in Jerusalem and them places," said Ann. Jerusalem she knew as far, far away from her in time and space, and anything of such tremendous antiquity as two hundred and fifty years she thought must belong to it.

From Plantation times Pat carried his researches back through the long period of Irish monasticism, and this is the period which has for him still the greatest attraction, although he left it for a while to wander in the dim ages of prehistoric man. An abbey wall will take him far and hold him long. For him to see it is to see the house of which it formed a part in all the glory of its prime. He knows enough of the system to be sure that the walls of a monastery did not, of necessity, encompass holiness—indeed, the abbey tales may be taken as representing his ideas of the good and bad of monkish life—and yet he cannot help feeling sad that the world has travelled too far for holy houses. Once, by permission of the lord of the soil, he cut long and deep trenches in the grounds of an abbey often mentioned in the "Annals of the Four Masters" as the burial-place of many

distinguished ecclesiastics. He believed that he should find evidences of interment far outside the presently used and very old graveyard, and he hoped to unearth some of the monumental crosses and inscribed stones, which surely, he thought, were placed over the burial-places of the old dignitaries. His expectations, in one respect, were justified. Under cultivated soil, unknown to tradition as the site of a burial-ground, the spade freely turned up bones and skulls; but of the elaborately-carved crosses there was no sign. Only in the black earth did he find a little causeway paved with sea-worn boulders, over which imagination saw pass and repass the monks who have been sleeping for seven centuries.

An old castle has nearly as great an attraction for the rhymer as the monastery. He has a queer feeling of being at home inside battlemented and machicolated walls—a gurgoyle's plashing stream is like a memory at times. He accounts for this feeling by supposing that he had an ancestor to whom such things were familiar, and that he happens to be the soil in which much of that ancestor re-lives, and he explains and illustrates a theory of heredity by occurrences in his farming experience. He has a field in which corn has not been grown in his lifetime, and which is not in a corn-growing district. Let the sod be lifted in spring or summer, the earth below moved to a depth of six or eight inches, and a crop of brick-red corn poppies will appear. He has another field which has been in grass as long as the owner or his neighbours can remember. It was plagued by dock a few years ago, and a large part of the ground had to be turned over in the effort to get rid of these weeds. In the loosened soil appeared, soon afterwards, large white turnips of a kind long out of cultivation. This long conservation of a buried seed's vitality and germination when conditions were favourable have, Pat thinks, a parallel in human life. Every soul of man is a patch of soil, varying in

size and condition and degree of fertility, but every patch, even the smallest, has in it the seed of every generation of the line along which life has passed to it from the beginnings of things, and these seeds never lose their vitality. The farthest back are the deepest buried. The crop of to-day is the product of seeds nearest the surface; the man is the son of his parents, modified by environment, and heir to results of all forces which have acted on his race from the beginning. But when, in the mysterious transmission of life, anything occurs in the field of humanity corresponding to that movement of the soil which permitted the poppy and turnip seeds to germinate, the man may be largely the revival of an ancestor or of ancestors, separated, perhaps, from his time by thousands of years. He may be the unadvanced, unaltered man of the past, moulded by the forces at work to-day, having not only the mental and physical characteristics of the revived ancestor, but also his habits, instincts, opinions, and even memories. There may be some hoeing turnips in Antrim to-day who laboured in the onion fields of Egypt three thousand years ago.

This is the farmer's theory; it differs from the received one in assuming the persistent vitality of the seed, and the probability of a practical revival of an individual in an age and situation far removed from that in which he first developed strength. It explains, he thinks, much in the acts and dispositions of men inexplicable by anything in their parentage or training, mediæval revivals, the polygamy of Mormonism, intuitions and curious mental sensations of all kinds.

Take, for example, the not uncommon sensation of familiarity with a landscape visited for the first time in a life. When the sense is stirred, the visitor expects that a new position will reveal certain features, and he is not disappointed. The explanation is that he *did* see the place before in his ancestor, and interest awoke the sleeping knowledge so

that at each turn of the road he knew what to expect. Pat has a friend into whose mind come continually syllabic arrangements, always in the same sequence. He finds himself saying these, to him, meaningless words over and over again. Pat holds that these sounds represent words familiar to an ancestor; words which, by importance at a crisis, or by iteration, burned themselves into the mind of that ancestor so deeply that his descendant finds himself repeating them continually without any knowledge of their meaning. Another person finds over and over again on the background of his mind the figures 797. Why he should think of them he does not know; some one of his line in the past had reason to remember them. The theory accounts for the common, apparently groundless, antipathies to certain animals or flowers, or even human beings, for a counterpart of a disliked person may have been obnoxious ages ago to an ancestor of him who feels the dislike now.

As for Pat himself, he thinks he had an ancestor who was a sea-rover, for always, in quietness, comes to him the thought of and sound of a boat's bows plunging in stormy water to the accompaniment of flute-like music. The music may be the whistling of the wind in the cordage of the sea-rover's galley, or it may be that the old sailors had pipers to cheer their toilsome rowing. He has had, too, an ancestor who was a crusader. From him came the sense of at-homeness in mediæval buildings which the rhymer experiences, and his mental pictures of "France's grey-green olives" and the "castles grim and high" of the land through which he makes Eric and Randal to pass.* He thinks that if it were possible for him to journey to the Holy Land by the route travelled by his supposed progenitor, he would "remember," as it appeared, each unaltered feature of the landscapes.

These mediæval pictures account for the rhymes which follow. The Abbey of the tales is a composite picture

* In "The Story of Eric,"—not included in this collection.

of three well known to the rhymer. All, of course, are ruins; one is little more now than a few yards of walls. One is on a treeless wind-swept site by the sea. Tall trees in which the rooks build, and sheltering walls are round the other two. The characters are pure inventions—perhaps the best liked by the rhymer is Friar John, but he thinks not unkindly of that rascal Tim.

INTRODUCTION TO THE ABBEY TALES

A TOUZLED string o' anshent rhymes
  Is twistin', twinin' thro' my heid,
Auld stories o' the monkish times,
  That, now they're prented, ye may read.
But whaur they cam' frae now they're here,
  And how they were writ out by me,
It's just as weel ye dinna speir,
  I wadna like to tell a lee.
Maybe I found them in the mowld,
  Maybe I got them in the air,
And tuk them as ye tak' the cowld,
  Unknowin' how, or when, or where.

THE DISCOVERY OF THE OYSTER

IF he that first invented sleep
Is blest, what honour should we heap
On him, the bowld, detarmin'd man,
That first tuk oyster-shell in han';
And bravin' pain or mortial ill,
Uncarin' if 'twould cure or kill,
First sook'd an oyster to his wame?

I ken that man—I ken his name—
Will, hoo it happen'd, tell the way,
Tho', hearin' it, ye'll maybe say
To accident he owes his fame.

Five hunner year ago or mair
These auld, grey-lichen'd abbey wa's,
Whaur nightly noo the howlet ca's
Wi' eerie sound on midnight air,
Whaur ghaists o' folk but middlin' good
Noo seek a scanty livelihood,
Were roofit tight and fill'd wi' men—
Auld Lindric was the abbot then.

'Twas hoary e'en in Lindric's time,
This hoose o' larn'd and haily men,
A poem writ in stane and lime,
This famous abbey o' the glen.
Safe shelter'd frae the caller breeze
By reverend and anshent trees,
It had its pools, deep-shaded o'er,
Frae which the lusty pike were fetch'd,
And warm, green, grassy knowes that stretch'd
Awa' doon to the sandy shore.

The church had tithe o' land and sea,
Land o' her ain and land in fee,
Cattle, and sheep, and droves o' swine,
And cellars fill'd wi' Spanish wine.
The plashin' tide on shore by night
Lull'd brethren to their sweet repose;
The cawin' rooks at mornin' light
Made music for them as they rose.
They livit weel, these haily men,
And agéd but by slow degrees;
Folk flourish'd like the aye-green trees
In this auld abbey o' the glen.

But grief and pain are everywhere,
The Abbot Lindric had his share,
His "skeleton" was Brither Tim
(Timotheus was his name in fu'),
Nae cupboard hid it out o' view—
A sair, sair bogie 'twas to him.
A look at Tim's weel-tonsur'd pate
(He, like the rest, went shaven shorn)
Show'd brains were scarce when he was born.
But Nature, aye considerate,
Had gi'en him what he likit mair,
A stamach, unco large in plan,
And wi' accommodation rare,
That helpit him, kind-hearted man,
To gi'e the shelter o' a hame
To lamb and fish and fowl and game
In the recesses o' his wame.
There, too, wi' copious draughts o' wine
He entertain'd the young o' swine.
Mind ye, he didna keep them dry;
Na, na, for drink they didna sigh;
He drook't them wi' the Spanish wine.

He was nae beauty, Brither Tim,
Nae grace had he o' face or limb;
He was a glutton, sae 'twas nois'd.
The nose, the een, the lips, the mou',
The heid, a globe o' ruby hue
On the great corpus superpois'd
Did certify the story true.
The neck that once had interfer'd
Betwixt them, lang had disappear'd.
Some o' the monks could recolleck
When Brither Tim possess'd a neck,

And it's Hejira used to sarve
To date events in Abbey life;
Brither to brither would obsarve,
"Ye'll mind, my brither, plague was rife
The year Timotheus lost his neck,
That mak's me ken the date exack,"
Or "hairst * that year was unco late,
I mind it, for Timotheus shear'd,
And folk that simmer often speir'd
What join'd his body to his pate."
Tim bought and sold the abbey swine
("A' he was guid for," some folks said),
He tith'd the corn and sheep and kine,
Tith'd for himsel' the Spanish wine,
And look'd upon it when 'twas red,
And when 'twas ither shades as weel,
A fact I'm sorry to reveal.
Sometimes the brethren fail'd to dine
Because he gaz'd sae at the wine,
And gaz'd sae lang he quite forgot
To put the denner in the pot;
Then cam' reproof and penance dour,
Reproof forgotten in an 'oor;
Penance for him had same effeck
As water on a grey duck's back.
When yearly on the reck'nin' day,
The abbot's drink sae rich and fine,
The wine, the guidly Spanish wine,
Aye lack'd the coont a lang, lang way;
Whaur it had gone to nane could say;
Tim's nose, 'twas rumour'd, only knew.
Yearly it big and bigger grew,
Yearly it took a redder hue,
Reflection o' the Spanish wine.

* Harvest.

Quo' Tim, "By Paul's adveeze I take
A leetle for my stomach's sake,
A leetle somethin' when I dine."
But the great nose that kenn'd, wad shake
And say as plain as plain could be,
"To ca' it *leetle*, Tim's a lee,
A great big elephantine lee."

But Tim transgress'd anither way.
If on the road he had to pass
A braw-built, sonsy country lass,
He'd stap and blether half the day,
And poke her ribs and laugh and grin,
And chuck her underneath the chin,—
Noo if it's coortin' time o' life,
And we're oot sarchin' for a wife;
Sic conduck's quite in order then,
For dacent folks like you and me,
But maist improper you'll agree
In pious, larn'd, and haily men.
Nae wonder Lindric aft wad say
That Tim wad be his death some day.

Maybe ye think I've quite forgot
Aboot the oyster. Troth, I've not.

It was a cool October day,
The simmer had been cauld and wet,
The harvest wasna gather'd yet.
Nae maitter what oor grannies say,
Auld pairchments I hae keek't at show
They had cauld simmers lang ago,
And this year there was great distress.
The country suffer'd famine sore,
Folk leev'd on naethin', or on less,
Ek'd oot wi' shell-fish frae the shore.

Tim was abroad to tak' the air,
The tide was oot, the sands were bare;
He thought he could, far aff, descry,
Ootlined against the hazy sky,
The forms o' twa three wimmen folk.
He buckled and pu'd roon' his cloak
And started aff across the sands,
Haudin' his skirts up wi' his hands,
Like leddies on a rainy day.
Maybe he thocht he saw a maid
He lik't to parley wi'—the blade.
I'll no decede, I canna say,
He may hae simply lik't the breeze,
He may hae needed exercese.
At any rate, aboot half-way,
Pickin' his steps ow'r slippy wrack,
He met a man, half-starvit, lean,
A puir auld man wi' hungry een,
Bearin' a wet and heavy sack.
The carl saluted, wad hae pass'd;
Curious to see what he amass'd,
Tim ca'd to the auld beggar chap
A lood authoritative "Stap!"

"Ye seek," quo' Tim, "to leave in lurch
Yer blessed mither, Haily Church,
And tak' wi' graceless heart what she
As tithe has right to frae the sea."
The bag cam' thuddin' to the sand.
"I hae nae wish the church to cheat;
Here's naethin' haily men wad eat,"
The man replied, then, in his hand
Display'd an oyster frae the sack.
"Only," quo' he, "that corn we lack

We wadna seek sic evil food:
God only kens ift's bad or guid."
"Open it quick," Timotheus cried;
The puir half-famished man complied.
Tim poked the cratur in the shell;
He look't it ow'r—essay'd to smell.
Now 'twas a lusty oyster this,
Nane o' yer wee thin tippeny bits
A man could eat—afore he quits
A hunner o', as easy's kiss.
Na, he and his imprison'd mates
Had rocky shells like denner plates.
Unsought, uneaten, oysters then
Leev'd langer than the maist o' men,
And grew to sizes wad amaze
The epicure o' modern days.
The one Timotheus held, nae doot,
Was fifty year or thereaboot,
But still in prime o' youth and strength
His days nae mair than hauf their length.
He thocht it time to close his shell,
Maybe he thocht the wind was cowld,
Or thocht the big red nose too bowld,
Intrudin' wi' design to smell;
He wantit words to say "git oot,"
Sae, tho' the friar had fingers strang,
He pu'd the daur to wi' a bang
And nipp'd the haily father's snoot.

When you, my hearer, were at schule,
And miss'd your task or played the fule,
Ye'll mind what happen'd—how the cane
Made a' your fingers burn wi' pain;
And you, too plucky or too prood
To wring your hands or cry alood,
Before a comrade, friend or foe,

Ye pursed your mooth in shape like O,
And sook'd the air in, might and main,
Makin' a sound that wasna' do-o-o-p
Nor fo-o-o-p nor so-o-o-p nor who-o-o-o-p,
But mixt o' a', to ease your pain.
Weel, that was what Timotheus did,
Only, the wee sma' air that slid
Thro' your roon' O and doon your throat
Was naethin' to the roarin' blast
That doon Timotheus' throttle pass'd
And lost itsel' in pairts remote.
Na! your genteel wee throttle pipe
Is but a teenie windle-strae
To that weel-trodden dusky way
By which the ham, the beef, the tripe,
The sookin'-pigs, the fish, the game
Found entry to the friar's wame.
The sough was like the autumn gust
That lays the pine-tree low in dust.
It tore the oyster frae his shell,
His lime-built, pearly citadel,
And hurried him at lightnin' pace
To that dark-cavern'd vasty place—
O' Tim's intarnal pairts the shrine,
Whaur Nature worshipp'd he wi' zeal,
Wi' offerin's o' fowl and veal,
And sookin'-pig and Spanish wine.

The passage gi'ed the monk a fright,
He was dumb-foonder'd—weel he might.
Had he tuk pison? Wad he dee?
What wad the issue o' this be?
He waited. In his wame or hairt
Or legs or heid or ither pairt
Nae deathly swoondin' pang he knew;
He turnit neither black nor blue;

But, on the contrar', calm prevail'd,
He felt refresh'd, reviv'd, regal'd,
And to the varlet sign'd the wish
He'd like to try anither fish.
This time Timotheus singled oot
A cutty knife, twa-edg'd, frae 'mong
The keys that at his girdle hung;
It guttit many a lusty troot.
Wi' it he ripp'd a shell clean aff
(He fear'd anither nippit snoot).
Haudin' the fish on t'ither half,
On tips o' fingers poisit high,
He sigh'd a great big muckle sigh
That sook'd the oyster aff his plate,
And sent him quick to join his mate.
His grip, ye see, could be but sma',
Half o' his hoose was pu'd awa'.
That settled maitters for the rest,
Nae question noo, if they were guid,
The friar's stamach cried for food,
He aye obey'd its least behest.
The wee twa-edgit cutty knife
Ne'er wark'd sae hard in a' its life.
The speed wi' which it pris'd a shell
In hist'ry has nae parallel;
It did it while ye coonted three.
A word just noo occurs to me,
I'd like, richt weel, to use it, if
I thocht ye could pronoonce it right,
"Rhythmic's" the word—it's rather stiff,
Eneuch to gi'e a man a fright,
Like a hale college at first sight.
I'll just expleen the meanin' here.
Rhythm's a periodic thump,
A regular recurrin' bump.
That ocht to mak' the meanin' clear,

But, to be rhythmic, it requires
The sounds must follow purty quick.
They're rhythmic sounds that angry sires
Mak' on posteriors wi' a stick.
Grand thocht that—rhythm in reproofs.
O' nae mair rhythms can I think
But sound o' trottin' horses' hoofs
And blacksmith's cheerfu' hammer clink.

Wae's me—I'm tir'd expleenin' things,
A word like that gi'es trouble sair
And poet into trouble brings.
I'm gaun to use it noo—tak' care—
THE . SHELLS . FELL . DOON . WI' .
RHYTHMIC . THUD.
I think ye've gotten somethin' *noo*.
Hech! there's a line that stirs the blood
Like some auld tale o' Waterloo.
Mark hoo it pictures you the scene,
The airms up, doon, like steam machine,
Warkin' the knife that ripp'd the shells,
These drappin' wi' a ring like bells,
A couple while you coonted three
Wi' rhythmic regularity.
THE . SHELLS . FELL . DOON . WI' .
RHYTHMIC . THUD.
Hech! sirs, it mak's ye think o' blood
Spill'd on the anshent battlefields.
Change shells to blows on leather shields,
And Homer might ha' writ the line
O' twa auld Greeks, inflam'd wi' wine,
Tryin' to sned each ither's heids,
The way I sned the taps o' weeds.
It's guid enough for Homer's brain,
Just tak' and say it ow'r again.

'Twill do ye good—it's mortial fine,
A rhythmic gem—I'm glad it's mine,
And far posterity will sing
Its praises for its gracefu' swing.
That line will leeve—tak' that for true,—
A thoosan' years or so frae noo.
Gang into any college place,
Ye'll find the auld professors there,
Expleenin' wi' the greatest care
To students o' the comin' race.
This leeterary diamond mine,—
Maybe, indeed, a special chair
Endow'd for study o' the line.
It's simply parfit, I'll maintain,
I like it weel—I'll say't again.
THE . SHELLS . FELL . DOON . WI' .
RHYTHMIC . THUD.
And noo we'll get alang—het scud.*

Ane oyster while ye coonted three,
Should twenty to the meenit be.
There were a hunner in the bag,
And sin' the action didna flag
(If my arithmetic's no' wrang),
Five meenits cleared the hale jing-bang.
This is the picture then was seen:
The shell-fish seeker, wan and lean,
His aspect weary, fu' o' care,
The leevin' image o' despair.
Item,—a monk weel satisfeed,
A sma' red globe (his shaven heid)
Pois'd on a greater lower doon.
Twa big red hands revolvin' roon',

* Hot scud = with great speed.

Rubbin' the bigger o' the twa,
Aboot the equatorial line
(The pairt affected when we dine).
Twa short stoot legs below them a'.
Item,—a heap o' oyster shells.
As for th' evicted fish themsel's,
Puir bodies, they, as p'raps ye know,
Had gone whaur the guid oysters go.

The monk address'd the starvit man,
Despoilt o' his expectit meal,
And aye, the slow revolvin' han'
Caress'd the wame he lov'd sae weel.
"Varlet," quo' he, "the times are hard,
Sae, oot o' love and kind regard
She bears to a' her children dear
The church remits, this famine year,
The tithe o' limpets, partens, snails,
A' things like these that come to han',
Ye'll keep them for yersel', puir man;
The church is kind whaur want prevails.
As for these strange new-fangled fish,
It is the Haily Church's wish,
That no' the tithe o' them, but a'
The lairge, the middlin' size, the sma',
Be hers henceforth, and ye shall bring
To her as Friday's offering
Three hunner, weekly, frae this date.
Twa hunner maun be leevit whaur
They tak' things at the big front daur,
Ae hunner at the wee back gate,—
Ye'll speir for me if I'm no' there.
Do what I tell ye noo wi' care,
Be wise and mind ye dinna shirk
Yer duties to the Haily Kirk."

Next time ye sook your oysters, frien',
Ye'll think o' what I here relate,
O' him the man o' waefu' mien,
Wha gather'd fish that ithers ate.
Nae labour can his hist'ry trace,
Nae mortial kens that varlet's name,
Timotheus, o' the human race,
Was first to tak' an oyster hame.
To sook an oyster to his wame,
The slippy, soothin', oyster chiel
That ilka bodie loves sae weel.
And frae that far October day,
The haily cloister men, they say,
On Fridays when they went to dine
Had roosin' plates o' oysters fine,
Weel drookit wi' auld Spanish wine.

BROTHER BRANDMAR

The anshent abbey o' the glen
Ow'd muckle to De Morla's men,—
Hot-temper'd folk that scorn'd at lear,
Big in the wame at fifty year,
Nae thocht o' broken limb or neck,
Nor fear o' God e'er kept them back
Frae reckless hunt, or bluidy fight,
Or wild, carousin', drinkin' night;
Sae death cam' aften unawares,
And mony a sad, short, shrift was theirs.

Then in the wee short hour or twa,
While death was luggin' them awa',
When the big daurs o' hell gap'd wide,
And ow'r the awfu' pit inside

The thoosan's o' expectant de'ils
Were buzzin' wi' exultant squeals,
The deed o' goold or rich toonland,
Sign'd wi' a tremblin' dyin' hand.
Enrich'd the kirk at cost o' heirs,
And chang'd the aspect o' affairs;
Bought entrance to celestial bliss
And pardon sure for aught amiss.
Then a' the wee, sma' bits o' de'ils
Wad fling their disappointed heels,
And the big smokin' daurs sae strang
Wad clash thegither wi' a bang.

The one that lived in Lindric's time,—
Black Hugo—wildest o' the clan,
Wha fear'd not God, nor kirk, nor man,
And coonted murther nae great crime,
Gi'ed Abbot Lindric mony a deer,
But 'fil't his gifts wi' converse rude,
Unseemly jest and utt'rance lewd,
The like nae haily man should hear.
It grieved the abbot aft and sair,
No' to reprove him then and there.
But conscience maun be highly strung
To flyte folk ye're behauden to;
Sae what could puir auld Lindric do
But tak' the gifts and—haud his tongue.

It wasna then wi' muckle joy,
Ae day in early simmer-tide,
The Abbot frae his window spied
O' men and horse a hale convoy
Approach the abbey daur wi' speed,
Black Hugo ridin' at the heid.
The red deer carried in the rear
Meant peace, but why the sword and spear?

And why sic troop o' horse and men
Wi' Hugo in the peacefu' glen?
He ne'er had seen his life before
Sic cavalcade at abbey daur.
"Lord save us frae sic retinues,"
Quo' he—and waited for the news.

He hadna muckle time to wait,
Black Hugo never waited lang.
Hech! what a brattle at the gate,
A rain o' blows sae lood and strang
That made the lion knocker roar;
Auld Gilbert, he that kept the gate,
Had never heard the like before.
It bang'd the daur at sic a rate
He tumbl'd, frichten'd, frae his chair,
Keek'd thro' the spy-hole in the wa'
At foot of Lindric's windin' stair,
Then, hearin' Hugo's angry ca'
That threaten'd clooted lugs or waur,
He stapp'd Sir Hugo's thund'rous din
By openin' the abbey daur.
The Abbot, fearfu', cam' behin'.

"Guid father mine," De Morla said,
"You haily men maun be well fed.
This buck for twa three days will last,
Ca' it a salmon if ye will,
And, sinless, by that name 'twill fill
A hungry wame on day o' fast.
Here, too's the makin' o' a monk,
A gift ye'll mair appreciate;
He has o' warldly pleasure drunk,
And safely noo within your gate
On haily things wad meditate.

Ye'll gi'e the youth yer watchfu' care,
A sma' stane cell and narrow stair,
A wee sma' cellar a' his ain,
A yard or twa o' airn chain,
The new wine, as the Scriptures say,
A bottle stoot and strang maun hae."

The abbot Lindric was nae fule,
He kenn'd what Hugo meant richt weel,
He hated trouble like the de'il,
And here was bother sair and dule,
That he, wha lovit weel his ease,
His dour black patron's whim to please,
Should tak' the lad before him bound,
Pit him in cellar underground,
And mak' his haily hoose a jail.
Well micht the priest his case bewail.
But what was his the lad's beside!
His mooth sae gagg'd he cudna ca',
His airms strapp'd back, his ankles twa
Beneath the horse's belly tied.
"He keeps," quo' Hugo, "very quate,
A'ready seems to meditate,
Thinks, monkish fashion, mair than says.
He sees, nae doot, the happy days
He'll spend in contemplation here,
Heaven on t'ither side the wa',
Naethin' to tempt the sowl ava'
Withoot ambition's hope or fear.
He was, ye'll ken, a lovesick youth,
Naethin' wad do him then, forsooth,
But dauchter o' De Morla's hoose,
The tether o' his thochts was loose
The day they wander'd up sae high;
But noo his sowl wad purify
Frae thocht o' earthly love, and try

To cool het bluid and passion's flame
Wi' cauld stane floor and hungry wame.
In sax weeks' time he'll sing, ye'll see,
Psalms through the nose wi' best o' ye."

Roger, his captive by mischance
Could use his een. His scornfu' glance
Said mair than words, and made the ire
O' black Sir Hugo burn like fire.
He swore a fierce and solemn aith
That ere he'd let a Linwood man
Wed dauchter o' De Morla's clan,
The girl should starvit be to death.

The puir auld abbot tried in vain
To mak' the angry knight relent,
Nocht he could say wad him restrain,
Nae airgument the deed prevent.
Wi' helpless wringin' hands he stood
To see the captive by him led,
Black Hugo in his anger rude
Still heapin' curses on his head.

Juist then cam' by a warldly man
That carried buckets frae the well.
"Here! tak' this wi' ye to yer cell,"
Quo' Hugo, takin' one in han',
"Ye'll sune in ither name appear,—
It's puir name, Roger, for a saint.
There's water to bapteeze ye here
And wesh awa' the warldly taint,
Let noo the sinfu' Roger dee,
And henceforth Amoroso be."
Wi' that he drook'd the captive weel,
Drook'd the puir lad frae croon to heel,

Then drapp'd the bucket wi' a laugh—
Ill-manner'd jauker he—and cried
To Lindric as he galloped aff,
"Console him, father, for his bride.
Till het bluid cools ye'll haud him doon,
I'll come to see ye verra soon."

Noo Abbot Lindric lov'd his rest,
He hated ructions like the pest.
Like to the foolish wife was he
That lets her weans their ain ways rin,
Then skelps them wi' severity;
In some short fit o' discipline,
Correctin' ills o' months' lax rule
Wi' minutes in a stricter school.
'Twas three weeks noo sin' Roger came,
'Twas evident his folk at hame
Kenn'd no' wha held the prison keys,
And Lindric 'gan to feel at ease.

The hoose had o' correction need,
O' discipline he'd try a screed.
Some monks, he heard, were keepin' hounds
At farms and shielin's here and there,
And slippit aff ootside the bounds,
Withoot his leave to coorse a hare.
And maist o' them were gi'en to shirk
The daily sarvice in the kirk.
Sae in his feeble weel-meant way,
The abbot scowlded for a day,
And made a rule that every man
Should be in kirk when pray'rs began,
Unless the duty was remit,
By him for reasons guid and fit.

The mornin' aifter, in his zeal
To mak' the errin' monks dae weel,
He, frae the anshent abbey book,
A guid twa hours o' sarvice took.
He gi'ed them penitential psalms,
Wi' pray'rs that rais'd onaisy qualms,
And readin's for contrition fit,
That anshent haily men had writ.
Next, into kirk he saw them a',
The hale jing-bang exceptin' twa—
Auld Tim, the absent reprobate,
And Gilbert, he that kept the gate.
Then as he lock'd them in he sigh'd,
And while a psalm was bein' sung,
The great keys at his girdle hung,
And to his ain apartment hied.

He had but climb'd the windin' stair
And cross'd his wee bit chamber bare,
Wi' pechin' breest, and footsteps slow,
To rest him in the window seat,
When, on the gravel doon below
He heard the scrunch o' horses' feet.
Losh me! it gi'ed him sic a start,
Wi' palpitation o' the heart,
Visions o' fire and sword cam' fast;
Had Roger's kindred come at last?
He keeks quick thro' the leeded panes;
But a' the frichten'd abbot sees,
Sair hinder'd by thick mullion stanes,
Is twa tails whiskin' aff the flees.

Doonstairs, auld Gilbert heard a rap,
A wee, sma', timid kind o' tap.

He hasted to the daur to go,
But Gilbert's haste was unco slow.
A score o' years ago, or mair,
Ane o' his feet—the left—was sair.
He tied it up wi' bits o' rag,
Auld cloots frae oot the beggar's bag.
And tho' lang syne he'd lost his pain,
The duds were never aff again;
For year by year, wi' muckle care,
On top o' auld he added mair,
Until, in time, the lump had got
In size as big as bushel pot.
He made pretence o' grievin' sair,
He cudna tak' o' wark his share;
But weel 'twas kenn'd the lump o' rags
Was but excuse for lazy legs.

Wi' air o' one by anguish torn,
And grunt and groan o' habit born,
Auld Gilbert mov'd his rusty banes,
Draggin' his fit alang the stanes.
He open'd to the timid knock,
And then, my faith! he had a shock.
A braw wee leddy standin' there!
Nane o' yer hizzies wi' red hair,
But O! the sweetest, dearest maid
That e'er made heart o' man afraid.
In form, in majesty, a queen.
Her hair was black and plentifu',
And tumbled ow'r her neck and broo,
In witchin' way as e'er was seen.
The face was pale, the eyebroos dark,
In lines as fine as painter's wark,
That, o' themsels, could wound a heart
Withoot the aid o' Cupid's dart.

Her robe o' green o' costly price,
Pu'd tight and square across her breests,
Was 'broider'd wi' heraldic beasts
In thread o' goold, wi' strange device.
And then her waist! her dainty feet!
The glovit hands sae sma' and neat!
Wi' ane she freed the 'broider'd dress
Frae capture by a prickly gorse,
The t'ither bravely held nae less
Than bridles o' twa champin' horse.
Noble she look'd. Her jet black hair,
Her brilliant een, and skin sae fair
Betoken'd blood o' coortly France.
Thence had her mither cam' frae, when
De Morla wi' his Antrim men
In youth had serv'd wi' sword and lance.
Nae wonder Gilbert, auld and fat,
Wish'd he were young and free to woo.
"Father," quo' she—just fancy noo
Ca'in' the fat auld beggar that—
"Father," quo' she, and sweetly smil'd,
"By a' that's true, by a' that's dear,
Tell Roger Linwood I am here;
Mona am I—Sir Hugo's child."
Then in auld Gilbert's hand she plac'd
A sma' goold cross, maist richly chas'd.
"Help me, guid father—help," she said,
"For sairly do I need your aid."

Into the wallet by his side
Auld Gilbert thrust the cross and chain.
"My leddy fair," quo' he, "I'd fain
See nae request o' yours denied.
We ken nae man by that name here,
And sae yer quest is vain I fear;

But haud yer heart in courage still,
I'll ca' the abbot an you will."

Roon' the corner wha should come
But that auld sinner—waddlin' Tim
(Nae sarvice in the kirk for him).
The lovely vision struck him dumb,
Ne'er had he seen sic lovely dame.
He scratch'd his nose, and star'd and star'd,
And smack'd his lips, and rubb'd his wame,
As if he'd eat her if he dar'd.
Sic majesty in ane so young!
She speaks to him, but in his awe,
The beggar canna fin' his tongue;
He stares at her wi' open jaw.

Upstairs, the abbot in his chair
Grew weary waitin' ower lang,
And, wond'rin' what the warld was wrang,
He shuffled doon the windin' stair.
Auld Gilbert heard his footsteps slow,
And whisper'd to the lassie, low,
"Ye'll fin' the laddie yet, nae fear,
'Deed I may tell ye that he's here,
But no' as Roger Linwood kenn'd;
Brandmar's the name they've gi'en yer friend.
Brocht by yer feyther 'gainst his will,
The abbot has him lock'd up still;
But, for the sake o' Heaven, pray
Dinna let on I tell't ye sae."

The abbot at the daur appear'd,
And what the matter was he spier'd.
Gilbert fell back. Tim, stupefied
And speechless, still the leddy ey'd.
Him did the abbot first address
In anger at his idleness.

"Awa' wi' ye, ye lazy loon;
Awa' and get yer errands dune.
If grace and godliness o' heart
Will no' incline ye to tak' part
In sarvice in the haily kirk,
Then let me see ye dinna shirk
The duties temp'ral in yer care;
Ye need a screed o' penance sair."
Then to the maid, "My dochter dear,
What brocht ye and yer horses here?"
"Father," the brave wee lass replied,
As one that winna be denied,
"'Tis Roger Linwood that I seek;
Wi' him—your Brandmar—I must speak."
"Must!" quo' the abbot, "we shall see;
Wi' a' the favour and respeck
Your father's dochter can expeck,
Must is nae word to say to me."
Just then, my word! he got a scaur,
What mair he'd said I canna tell,
For there beside him at the daur
The socht-for Roger stood, himsel'.
The puir auld abbot, faint wi' fear,
A prey to thoosan' vague alairms,
Noo saw th' imprison'd lad appear
And clasp his sweetheart in his airms.

Nae secret plot set Roger free,
Nae frien's amang the monks had he,
Nor was it his ain use o' tool
That put an end to prison days;
'Twas naethin' but the lazy ways
Engender'd by auld Lindric's rule.
Three weeks was just aboot as lang
A time as rule o' his kept strang;

Three weeks had Roger captive been,
His jailers wer'na just sae keen,
And carelessness began to show.
Then cam' the row I tell't ye o',
Wi' threat that some might be unfrock'd,
And Roger's guards were o' the lot
That got their wiggin' purty hot;
It made a' else to be forgot.
That morn they left his cell unlock'd.

A hunner times a day or mair,
And aye wi' increase o' despair,
Roger his prison daur had tried.
This day—O joy !—it opened wide.
He slippit up the windin' stair;
He keek'd alang the corridor—
Cauld smellin' place wi' sanded floor—
Wastward was porter Gilbert's chair.
He turn'd the ither way to win
Thro' daur o' kirk, but found it fast;
He heard the sleepy chant within.
He settled then to try the wast
And tak' auld Gilbert by surprise,
Tho' 'twas a risky thing to do.
He did surprise him, it is true,
He hardly could believe his eyes;
But Roger was surpris'd himsel',
For Gilbert rais'd nae shout o' fear,
Nor cried him back to seek his cell,
But on the contrair sign'd, "Come here."
He shook his heid and screw'd his face
In sign o' silence to the lad,
But, wantin' him to mend his pace,
He wav'd his fist at him like mad.
The lang wide ha' just near the end
Turns shairply to the southern gate;

The lad has nearly reached the bend,
A minute mair he'll ken his fate.

(Wad the obleegin' prenter man
Hae twa three big types in his han',
Oot o' the cairt loads in his store.
We're comin' to the pairt, ye see,
Whaur three things meet the laddie's ee,
Each sweeter than the ane before.
The open daur, the simmer sky,
And, best o' a', the bonnie lass.
I want ye, prenter, then to try
To prent them as they come to pass,
In bigger types. The reason why
Ye'll see at wanst if ye refleck.
It ocht to hae a grand effeck.
Be ready noo, the time is ripe,
Stand by——)

the lad has reach'd the bend,
His trouble's comin' to an end.

(Mind, gie the lass the biggest type!)

He saw the big DOOR OPEN—wide,
He saw the BLUE AND SUNLIT SKY
Wi' clouds like snowy mountains high,
The sky o' early simmer tide.
But, better still than that, and mair
Was by the astonish'd laddie seen,
MONA was there—he rubb'd his een—
MONA
HIS SWEETHEART standing there!!!

(Troth, prenter man, ye did that weel;
Ye handle types wi' muckle skeel,
I'll pay ye extra in the bill,
And mind ye when I mak' my will.)

Dear reader, ye hae wrastled thro'
Wi' patience, and ye're tir'd the noo.
I think this is as guid a pairt
As ye could hae to drap the book
And turn yer een anither airt.
Sae let them kiss and dinna look.
Ye did the same yersel', I'm shair,—
Dear knows, wi' sax o' them or mair.
Ye ken, then, hoo that sweethearts feel
And winna this puir couple blame.
Ye never did, ye tell me! Weel
Ye wantit to—it's a' the same;
A' theologians are agreed
The will's aye taken for the deed.

Puir Lindric looked awa'. His nose
Wi' blushin' was like fire ableeze,
For haily men, ye may suppose,
Tak' nocht to dae wi' things like these.

"O Roger dear," the lassie cried,
"Ye'll come awa' wi' me, ye will;
Yer folk hae search'd, are searchin' still,
Wi' sorrow a' the country side.
Auld William tell't me o' yer fate
Only at night—last night—and late,
He cam' wi' you and father here;
There's naethin' father winna dare,
And if he kenn'd wha tell't, I fear
The puir auld man wad suffer sair.
And, Roger dear, last night I dream'd
I socht ye here wi' horses twa,
And in my troubled sleep it seem'd
Together, safe, we rode awa'.

And noo—not dreamin'—I am here,
Here are the horses—ane for each,
Ye will come wi' me, Roger dear;
O fly beyond my father's reach."

The abbot found a voice to speak,
"Gae back, my son, frae whence ye came,
And you, my tender lassie, seek
The shelter o' yer father's hame."
Then Roger laugh'd, "Go, ask the bird,
Escapit frae the limèd tree,
To gang back at the fowler's word!
Nae, Father Lindric,—I am free.
Be thankfu', then, if for your share
In this unjust and foul affair
There's no' a bonfire in the glen,
Lit by the anger'd Linwood men."

Across the tremblin' abbot's mind
Cam' visions o' a fearfu' kind,
The Kirk defil'd—the abbey burn'd,
His gardens fair to deserts turn'd,
The monks a' scatter'd far and wide
In caves or mountain glens to hide—
O if he only might attain
To lock the lad up safe again!
"Gilbert!" he cried, "nae time to waste,
Ca'—brethren—help—O man, mak' haste."
Then spyin' the retreatin' Tim,
He cried wi' a' his might to him.
But a' the noise he made was sma',
And might have been 'deed nane ava'.
He *had* a voice as younger man,
Say forty years or sae before;
To hear it then in chant was gran'—
Och! then 'twas like a lion's roar,

Or brattle o' the beetlin' mills.
It shook the kirk roof nearly doon,
And rowl'd and growl'd wi' a' the soon'
O' thunder 'mang the Antrim hills.
But noo his cry was but a wheeze;
The wind, on side o' love and youth,
Just grupp'd it as it left his mooth
And landed it in taps o' trees
Amang a meetin' o' the craws,
Convenit to discuss their laws,
Which alteration need wi' years.
The cry cam' to the chairman's ears—
A cross auld bird—wha thocht the noise
Cam' frae back branches—frae the boys.
He ca'd oot, "Order!—order there!"
And warn'd them what they might expeck.
He said he'd stan' nae disrespeck
As lang as he was in the chair.
The wind near split his sides wi' glee
To hear them cry oot, "'Twasna me."
And as for the unconscious Tim,
Nae breath o' it e'er reachit him.
He daunder'd on wi' laggin' feet,
Still musin' on the vision sweet.

And Gilbert to help Mona tried;
"Father, the brethren a'," quo' he,
"Are lock'd up by yer ain decree,
The keys are hangin' at yer side."
"Here, tak' them, quick," the abbot cried,
And flung them to him on the ground.
But Gilbert, cunnin' Gilbert, found
His fit was unco sair that day;
He grunted in a fearfu' way,
And dragg'd himsel' sae slow alang

As if his shoes were fill'd wi' peas.
Ere he a couple yairds could gang
Roger had seized the bunch o' keys.
"Father," quo' he, "I'll e'en tak' chairge
O' these—they're safe—sae dinna fret,
It's early in the morn as yet,
Too soon to set the monks at lairge.
By a' accoonts they hae gret need
O' kirk, and sae 'twill dae nae hairm
To gi'e them there a langer tairm
Than maybe ye at first decreed.
The smith can free them—send for him
When next ye see guid Father Tim."

Then lightly, wi' her sweetheart's aid,
To saddle sprang the smilin' maid,
And he, the happy laddie, he
Free, as the lark in air is free.
A kingdom wi' its goolden croon
Wad no' hae bocht his parfit joy.
God save them baith from mair annoy,
And grant them ilka cravit boon.

When Hugo next his dochter saw,
Aweel—he had a son-in-law.

FRIAR JOHN

I

O' a' the monks lang deid and gone
Nane was sae guid as Friar John.

Folk saw but what was there to see,
A lang thin figure bent a wee,

Twa een that pierc'd ye thro' and thro'
Yet spoke a gentle heart and true
That would the brither-man befriend,
And neither God nor man offend;
But what his story, whence he came,
Wha were his people, what his name,
Nane but the Abbot Lindric kenn'd.

His seldom feast had nocht o' greed,
His frequent fast was fast indeed,
His was the clear, transparent skin
That shows the Spirit's light within.
To see, to hear him, was to ken
That God still dwelt wi' sons o' men.

His was the duty and the will
To scribe the Haily Word wi' skill,
Wi' a' the airt craft o' the age
He trac'd the penn'd and painted page,
Where words like armies stood in ranks
God's words, or men's in praise and thanks,
And at their heid a letter great
Wi' tint and goold illuminate.
The bands mysterious, interlac'd,
Wi' which the sacred page was grac'd,
Were by his skilfu' fingers penn'd,
And symboleez'd, I ha' nae doot,
God's wondrous ways, past findin' oot—
His nae beginnin' and nae end.

A book-encumber'd chamber sma',
Wi' stane-built, bare, unplaister'd wa'
And roof o' timber high and dark,
Gave place to Friar John to wark
For love o' God and man's behoof.

And ow'r his table, rough and plain,
A lamp hung by an iron chain,
A lang black chain that reach'd the roof.
And on the wa's, as was maist fit,
Were painted texts frae Haily Writ.

Here frae the risin' o' the sun
The friar penn'd the Haily Writ,
And when the lang, lang day was done
At eventime the lamp was lit.
And oft thro' night hours lane and dark,
Sae keen engross'd was Friar John,
His solitary lamp burn'd on
Till dawn surpris'd him at his wark.
God's aid he crav'd for hand and brain.
He prais'd Him for a page begun,
And, each page finish'd, knelt again
To praise Him for a page weel done.
And God wi' fame his labour crown'd,
He made him ow'r the warld renown'd;
For kings wad send frae distant lands
To buy the Gospels frae his hands.

Outside the abbey doorway, Tim
(The cellarman, ye've heard o' him)
Sat in the sun to warm himsel',
And wait the welcome supper bell.
He rubs his wame wi' big fat fist,
His heid draps for'ard on his chist.
What is it mak's him sae incline?
Is't o' his penances he thinks?
Nae fear! he snores, tak's forty winks,
And dreams o' sookin' pig and wine.

"Figs! Smyrna figs! here, taste and try
The finest figs that goold can buy.

Come buy this spice and gi'e God thanks,
Buy almonds frae the Jordan's banks."
It was a sailor man that spoke,
And at his cryin' Tim awoke.
Fu' weel he lik'd a bit o' chat
Wi' pilgrims, sailors, folk like that.
And weel he lik'd to buy for feast
The fruits and spices o' the East.

The sailor led by chain an ape
Bocht in the southern pairt o' France—
A beastie wi' the human shape,
That somehow had been taught to dance.
Hech sirs! it was a sight to see
That silly cratur dancin' jigs,
'Twas better than a feast o' figs,
And made Tim snigger he-he-he.
The hops and antics pleas'd him so
He likewise chuckled ho-ho-ho.
The puir ape seemit pleas'd at this,
And bow'd and scrap'd and threw a kiss,
Till Tim burst out wi' ha-ha-ha.
And then he lay back in his seat,
And laugh'd sae at the monkey's feat
He fairly shook the abbey wa'.
And he, the scribe wha notice took
O' strange things that the kirk befell,
He felt the shakin' in his cell
And writ an arthquake in his book.
Tim rowl'd his een and chok'd and laugh't,
And acted like a bodie daft,
And as he chuckled, laugh'd his fill,
His aye-red face grew redder still,
The mair he ha'-ha'd, he-he'd, ho'd,

Until the sailor man grew fear'd.
Was this auld monk in fits? he speir'd,
Or was he likely to explode?
He pack'd his wares to mak' escape,
He wanted clear o' sic mishap;
But Tim entreated him to stap,
And ask'd him wad he sell the ape.
The sailor ponder'd, did the deed,
The ape was sold, the tarms agreed.
The beast's new master tuk the chain
And led the ape to cellar cauld,
Amang the new wines and the auld,
The guid auld wines o' France and Spain.

That night Tim in his narrow bed
(Blethers! the bed was big for three
Fair or'nar folk, like you and me,
But in a' stories sung or said
The beds o' monks maun narrow be,
And stuff'd convaniently wi' whins,
Horse nails, thorn bushes, tacks and pins,
Authorities in this agree.
But Tim car'd naethin' in the least
For what was fit for monk or priest.
On feathers saft he lov'd to lie,
The saftest feathers man could buy.)
That night Tim in his narrow bed
(Ye'll let me wi' the rules comply)
His slow imagination fed
Wi' thocht o' fun and pleasant jape
And comic antics o' the ape.
But when, next day, he sought joyance,
The beastie clean refus'd to dance;
The cratur seem'd to whinge * and pine,

* To whine.

It wadna tak' the proffer'd nuts,
But cower'd close behind the butts
That held the French and Spanish wine.
It was the same next day, and next;
The righteous sowl o' Tim was vex'd,
The ape did naethin' guid or bad,
But rested silent, sullen, sad.

The sixth day brought the sailor man.
Before again he sail'd the main
He wish'd to see his ape again.
And Tim to tell his woes began.
The sailor heard the monk's complent,
Then doon the cellar stair he went.
"Hoots, man," quo' he, "I'll soon unfauld
The cause o' this—the beastie's cauld;
A man wad freeze in sic a den.
Ye'll hae to gi'e him licht and air,
And lodge him somewhere up the stair,
He comes frae sunny lands ye ken."
But Tim declar'd it couldna be;
The abbey laws, he said, were strick,
And a' sic pets were interdick.
It must stay under lock and key;
The cratur must be kept conceal'd,
And a' his tricks and antics droll
Be for his ain divarsion, sole.
His presence maunna be reveal'd.
"Weel then," the sailor man he says,
"Ye'll hae to mak' the beastie claes.
He needs a dacent cutty * goon,
Yer ain auld duds will do, cut doon."
Tim brocht an anshent gabardine

* Short.

That he for years and years had worn,
A' faded, stain'd it was, and torn,
And, truth to tell ye, no' sae clean;
But frae its ample raggedness
They made the starvit ape a dress,
Sark, goon, and girdle a' complete,
And warm and strang—I won't say neat.
The beastie made a dacent monk,
And then in Malmsey, clear and fine,
That grand auld emperor o' wine,
"The latest brither's health" was drunk.

For next six weeks or maybe mair,
Guid Brither Tim's fat sides were sair
Wi' laughin' at the tricks and japes
O' this, the cleverest o' apes.
It was his custom (that is—Tim's)
What time the friars sang their hymns
To slip awa' to meditate,
Awa' doon by the cellar stair;
It was sae calm and quiet there,
He introspected, as I state.
It was indeed a lov'd retreat
And fit for meditation sweet,
Where cobwebb'd butts o' guidly wines
Were rang'd in lang imposin' lines.
Tim's heart was wi' them—weel he kent
Their names and dates and sweet content.
And here, wi' never need for book,
He sperritual comfort took.

Ae day—it was the end o' May—
A calm, sweet, peacefu' simmer day,
But het as—weel, the hettest thing
Ye ken o'—day to mak' ye fling

Your duds and trimmin's here and there,
Behind, before you, anywhere,
Until there but remains the sark,
The last dud dacency requires,
Nae maitter how a man perspires.
A day when cellars, cool and dark,
And liquids, amber-tint or red,
Are things by mortals much desir'd.
On this, a warm day as I said,
Tim to his cellar had retir'd.
He heard the monkey shake its chain,
'Twas peggit to a big flat stane;
And, in a mood compassionate
And marcifu', he slipp'd the pegs
To let the cratur stretch its legs,
And then commenc'd to meditate.

Wi' gentle mien and look benign
He drew a pint or sae o' wine,
And put it in a guid safe place.
He then repeated that, in case
The first should feel a wee bit shy
Wi' naethin' o' its kin near by.
Then, next, he tried anither kind
To see if it were weel refin'd;
As was maist fit and requisite
He held it up against the light,
And look'd on it when it was red,
And brocht it, gently, near his head
To see if it wad stand the test
O' guid and safe and proper drink,
And then I think, I awmost think,
He put it whaur he put the rest,
And smack'd his lips and rubb'd his wame
And tried anither o' the same.

He wasna parfit even then,
And sae he tried it ow'r again.
His sense o' duty now was stirr'd
(May we a' duty's ca' obey),
To try the lot he did essay.
And then a cur'ous thing occurr'd:
It might ha' been an elfish charm,
Or that the Spanish was too sweet;
It might ha', simply, been the heat—
The day, as I remark'd, was warm.
Again, I oft ha' heard declare,
There's sperrit in a cellar air.
Tim may ha' felt it ower strang,
Or meditated ower lang,
At any rate, the truth constrains
Me to admit the fack remains,
By one, or a' o' these, or some,
Tim was, we'll ca' it, owercome;
And when his senses cam' again
He found, to his surprise and pain,
The ape had play'd a shabby trick,
Had ta'en advantage o' his state,
To be exack—the reprobate
Had vamoos'd—hook'd it—cut his stick.

Strange tales and stories now began
To pass about frae man to man.
The anshent abbot in his bed
Heard sounds uncanny, so 'twas said.
Some, worthy o' belief, averr'd
By them the sound o' steps was heard.
That might be rats, but how explain
The rattle o' an iron chain?
Sae terrors dark the monks opprest,
Vague stories gather'd thick and fast
Until a story cam' at last

Mair circumstantial than the rest.
A brither, passin' doon to pray'rs,
Just when the daylight 'gan to wane,
Heard footsteps and the sound o' chain,
Distinkly clinkin' on the stairs.
It was THE THING, as he surmis'd,
And while he waited, paralys'd,
Alang the corridor it slunk,
Dress'd in the habit o' a monk.
He watch'd the fearfu' thing move on,
Straight to the cell o' Friar John;
It enter'd—then he heard again,
Distink, the rattle o' a chain.
Then by cam' Friar John himsel';
He warn'd him what was in his cell,
But John the fearless didna care,
He walkit straightway to the door,
Keek'd in and a' aboot the floor,
And cried back there was naethin' there;
But one thing he could *not* explain,
The lamp was swingin' on the chain.

The rowlin' story differs frae
The rowlin' stane, it gathers moss;
And this tale didna suffer loss
In passin' roon' frae day to day.
The puir bit ape (for it was he)
Was ten feet high (he was but three),
He had a red-hot forkit tail
(The cratur had nae tail ava,
Or, if he had, it was but sma'),
He had a scaly coat o' mail,
He was, to put it gently, lame,
He spat out sulphur, fire, and flame.
As nae man kenn'd about the ape

But Tim, ye needna be surpris'd
That frighten'd haily men devis'd
These betterments to size and shape,
And time, they thought, wad soon reveal,
Wha *he* was aifter, *he* the—weel,
They do say that his residence
Is weel embellishit wi' flames.
Fegs na—I winna mention names,
Then naebody can tak' offence.

And Tim—weel, first, it was, he thocht,
The ape that a' this fuss had wrocht,
But when the beast that made him sport
Was sae embellish'd by report
He felt, my frien', as you wad feel,
No' far located frae the—weel
I said, and I'll repeat the same,
I see nae need to name a name.
But just to put ye on the track
Whisper—*he's maistly painted black.*
I ought to dig your ribs just here,
And purse my lips and scart my ear,
Say humph, and ask ye if ye twigg'd.
I canna dig your ribs in prent,
Sae for the deed ye'll tak' intent,
And please consider that ye're digg'd.

That night that Tim lay "owercome"
And prostrate on the cellar floor,
The ape soon found the open door
And left his "meditatin'" chum.
He keekit here, he keekit there,
He made a rattle on the stair,
Then, bolder grown, he wander'd on,
And found the cell o' Friar John.

He enter'd, saw sic bonnie things,
The inks and colour pots in nooks,
The leather for the backs o' books,
The rowls o' pairchments tied wi' strings.
He found the friar's supper spare,
And as his inner pairts were bare
The puir bit supper was annex'd.
(He had nae conscience to be vex'd,
'Deed may ha' thought for his behoof
Some kindly hand had spread the meal.)
His next idea was to spiel *
The lamp-chain hangin' frae the roof,
Awa' up 'mang the baulks and beams
To the delighted ape it seems
Like climbin' in his native trees.
And if he didna ken to say
Wi' some auld chap, "I'm here, I stay,"
He *did* stay—roostin' at his ease.

Here days pass'd by o' great delight
(Nae doot it will be clear to you,
I tak' the monkey's point o' view;
The monks were nearly dead wi' fright),
Up in the roof beams stoot and strang,
He watch'd the monk the hale day lang,
And when the friar left the cell
He slither'd doon and help'd himsel'
To anything that sparkled bright,
Or satisfied his appetite
Wi' somethin' frae the friar's plate.
'Deed where and how his meat had gone
Was wonder now to Friar John.
His cry for food was never great,
And sic sma' modicum he ate

* Climb.

He had it sent him in his den,
And took a mouthfu' now and then.
But since an ape, unkenn'd, unseen,
Amenable to nae reproof,
Had ta'en up lodgin's in his roof,
The puir man's plate was maistly clean
And bites were few and far between.
Puir starvit John! he lov'd too weel
His paints and colour pots to feel
The achin' void, the vacuum,
The hollowness that sure wad come
To your intarior, friend, or mine,
If we on fruit and bread should dine.
And if the share o' fruit and bread
Requir'd to keep our wames in shape
Were taken by a thievin' ape
To fill his ain wame out, instead.
Puir John, puir man, his sunken cheek
Grew daily whiter, he mair weak,
And daily the onchristian ape
Grew mair and mair rotund in shape.
By day he dwalt amang the beams,
By night, when John was dreamin' dreams,
He slippit doon the chain wi' ease
And took some needed exerceese,
Climbin' ere dawn to roost again.
And haily men were fill'd wi' dread
And rowl'd onaisily in bed;
At every rattle o' the chain
Or noise he made in search o' grub
Their big fat sides wi' terror shook
For fear they should be brocht to book;
(*They thocht it was Beelzebub*).

II

It was a gospel nobly writ,
For hand o' king or emp'ror fit;
In troth it was a blessit sight,
That book wi' a' its walth o' hue,
The goold, the purple, and the blue,
The wee sma' letters black as night,
The big ones like the P and Q,
Wi' saints and angels keekin' thro'
And endin' off in claws, or nails,
Or heads, or legs, or twisty tails.
Och man! it was a sight to see
The great tremenjous letter B
That started the Beatitudes.
Ye saw inside the upper hoop
Or, mair correckly, maybe, loop,
A couple o' bare naked nudes,
The parents o' the human race
In state o' innocence and grace,
And chattin' cosy as ye please
In Eden, underneath the trees.
Then in the lower loop ye had
Anither chapter as it were;
Ye saw the same unfortnit pair,
Nae langer innocent, but clad
(They had nae breeks or sarks wi' sleeves,
But just wee waistbands made wi' leaves),
Chas'd by revolvin' swords and knives,
And scuddin' for their very lives.
Och! 'twas the finest book, I think,
That e'er was writ wi' pen and ink,
And John the writer, wi' a pang,
To think this triumph o' his hands
Should gang awa' to foreign lands,
Gaz'd at it lovin'ly and lang.

Soon frae a draw'r the seal he drew
That seal'd and sign'd each copy true,
A jewell'd ring o' matchless price,
Wi' rich red stane that glow'd like flame,
Engravit wi' the friar's name
In strange and intricate device.
It was the custom wi' this mark
To seal and sign the friar's wark,
That rais'd to sic repute his name
And brocht the abbey wealth and fame.
This was a noble count's command,
Two years the gospel was in hand,
The end had awmost come too soon.
The friar laid the jewel doon,
Again wi' lovin' hands uptook
The glorious 'luminated book
Just finish'd there that very night;
His two years' labour and delight,
His two years' life it might be said,
The godly friar bow'd his head.
"My thanks accept, O Lord," quo' he,
"For strength to do this wark for Thee;
The head, the heart, the hands are mine,
But Thou hast made them—I am thine;
This be my rich reward and fee,
Thy blessin' on my wark and me."
This was his fu' and parfit wage;
The lamp by lang black chain and hook
Hung ow'r the table and the book,
And lit the gilded pictur'd page.

Awa' up 'mang the beams ow'rhead
The monkey saw the seal and ring;
He thocht, "I wish I had that thing."
The bonnie jewel sparkled red.

If but the monk wad gang to bed,
He soon wad slither doon the chain
And mak' the bonnie thing his ain.
But, though the midnight hour was nigh,
The monk show'd nae desire to lie;
His hand the gilded page caress'd,
Not yet had he the seal impress'd;
It lay beside the bonnie book,
And glow'd and glimmer'd, trembled, shook,
It sparkled like a bit o' fire,
And rais'd to flame the ape's desire.
He couldna wait—his brain I wis
Had somethin' o' a thocht like this:
"I'll ha' to get that plaything soon.
I wonder if I drappit doon,
Just drapt like lightnin' doon the chain,
Wad I ha' time to grab the stane
Before that cratur ca'd a man
Could catch me? 'Deed I think I can.
I'll try it anyway—Here goes."
He did not think it weel, I s'pose,
To gi'e his courage time to damp,
Or fash wi' doots his wee bit brain;
He slid like lightnin' doon the chain,
Right doon atop the burnin' lamp,
Put oot his paw and grabb'd the seal;
He gave a most tremenjous squeal,
A yell that tell't o' fear and pain,
And tore up to his perch again.

A moment pass'd—the monk was gone—
His wild shriek rent the midnight air,
And he had fled—nae monk knew where,
Nane heard again o' Friar John.

Ye'll maybe think it right to ax
Some explanation o' the facks
Narrated in the last ten lines,
And 'deed my judgment, too, inclines
To try the hail thing to explain
And mak' the story clear and plain.
Then, first and foremost, we ha' found
What time the ape—the thievish scamp—
Sat doon upon the burnin' lamp,
He gi'ed oot nae onsartain sound.
The case o' nae disproof admits,
An ape's no' fireproof where he sits,
Nae mair than are the rest o' us,
And that is why he made the fuss.
I ought to mention here, I feel,
His coat was badly burn'd as weel,
And as for John—why he was skeer'd
And why he shriek'd and disappear'd.
Weel, my bit theory is this—
The man was weak, he couldna miss,
But be unslept and underfed.
He grudg'd the minutes spent in bed,
And as for what he had to eat,
Ye ken the ape had ta'en the meat.
This must ha' meant, I say again,
A weaken'd body, weaken'd brain.
Then, too, O horrible!—the deil
(He thocht 'twas he) had ta'en his seal.
A seal stands for the man himsel',
Wi' it his wishes he can tell,
Confirm and end what he wad say,
And puir John thought—ye winna scoff—
He thocht the Lord had cast him off,
And signified the same this way.

Was't wonder in his agony
He cried that loud and bitter cry,
And frae the abbey took his flight
Out into darkness—into night?

III

When on the midnight air the cries
O' John and o' the ape rang clear,
The monks shook in their beds wi' fear,
But some had courage left to rise.
They sought the painter friar's cell,
And this is what they had to tell—
The book, complete except the mark,
Lay on the table, clear and plain,
The lamp was swingin' on its chain
And burnin' strangely low and dark.
The monk was gone—they ca'd his name
A dizzen times—nae answer came.
There was a singit, scorchit smell
(The ape had burn'd his woollen goon),
There was a sort o' groanin' soon'
(The ape bemoanin' o' himsel'),
The fack, they thocht, was clear as day,
But mair they wadna like to say;
The brethren kenn'd as weel as you
The way to add up two and two.

The abbot and a few auld men
In solemn conclave met at ten
To sift the maitter thro' and thro'
And settle what they ocht to do.
And when their lang confab was din
They ca'd the congregation in.

"Brethren," the abbot said, "we feel
That this is nae wee trump'ry deil;
Indeed, frae a' that is to tell,
We think the veesit's frae *himsel'*.
If that is sae, to get him hence
Will be a maitter o' expense;
Some things to borrow we can try,
But ither things we'll ha' to buy.
To Bangor abbey we will send,
And ask the brethren there to lend
Some relics, hair or tooth or limb
O' saints that fought and conquer'd *him*.
We'll use these relics wi' oor ain;
We'll need, at least, a quarter stane
O' incense, very finely ground,
O' guid wax can'les, forty pound,
O' poodhered amber, what wad lie
On shillin' piece if heapit high.
And then it winna be far wrang
O' haily water, fresh and strang,
To ha' onlimited supply.
We'll ha' to borrow, too, a bell,
Our ain is crackit since it fell,
And then there will be said or sung
Some stiff things in the Latin tongue.
O' coorse *he* may be satisfeed
Wi' what he's got, and sae nae need
For these arrangements will arise;
But lest he should disturb wi' cries,
Or try to demonstrate again
Wi' burnin' smell or clinkin' chain,
Or try to fright us wi' a squeak,
We'll ha' things ready this day week.

IV

It was the set appointed date,
Arrangements were in for'ard state.
The relics auld for which they sent
To Bangor abbey had been lent.
And a' the other things were there,
The fumigatin' incense rare,
The bells, o' shape baith roon' and square,
The books wi' skin and leather backs,
The can'les o' the finest wax,
The amber rich to cleanse the air,
The Latin frae the dictionaire
In fearsome shape was ready too,
And water blest, three buckets fu',
To splashify the wa's and floor
Was sittin' in the corridor.

Preceesely at the hour o' ten
The abbot went to meet his men.
But no' a monk was at the cell.
Each had decided for himsel'.
It might be just as weel to wait
And let the cleansin' wark commence,
Then a' bein' safe, on some pretence
He could excuse his bein' late.
Nae doot it was a grand idee
To be ahint the rest a wee,
It meant escape if ocht went wrang;
But then, ye see, the hail jing-bang
Had plann'd exack the very same!
And sae they a' thegither came
Just twenty minutes past the time,
To get a scoldin' for the crime.

"Ye're never late, folks, at your meals,"
The abbot said. "Ye ne'er-do-weels."
He order'd them to hurry in
And get things ready to begin.
He tell't them where to stand, themsel's,
And where they were to place the bells;
He minded them they maun succeed
Wi' a' they possibly could need,
The relics o' the saints at rest,
The incense o' the very best,
The can'les and the amber-dust,
But specially he put his trust
On two ill-shapen Latin words
O' maist extr'or'nar' pow'r and speed,
By anshent writers guaranteed
To bring doon deils like hawk-struck birds.

Noo that they're gettin' things in shape,
We'll say a word aboot the ape.
Before he cam' amang the monks
He oft had slept in sailors' bunks;
'Twas naethin' new for him to creep
Amang the blankets for a sleep,
And sae since Friar John had fled,
He took possession o' the bed.
He spent the night in prowlin' roon',
Lay doon at dawn and slept till noon.
The bed—did I no' tell ye that
'Twas at the end ye enter'd at?
Just in the corner to your right,
The farthest corner frae the light.

The monks had crushit thro' the door,
It wasna wide—nae doot o' that,
Fu' forty monks, and maistly fat,
Wi' a' their exorcisin' lore.

But two were missin'—one was Tim,
'Tis what ye wad expect frae him.
Had he been there to see the ape
Things might ha' ta'en a diff'rent shape.
But he was firm convinc'd and sure
That some one used to temp'rature
Higher than that this climate boasts
O' late was visitin' their coasts.
He thocht (and I think rightly too),
Supposin' that these tales were true,
The farther he could keep frae *him*
The better it wad be for Tim.
And sae, as he kenn'd how to do,
He coin'd the story that a coo
Was sick in some far distant byre;
Which gi'es occasion here to say
That, in a figurative way,
He was a fit son o' his sire.
The only ither man no' there
Was Gilbert—and his foot was sair.
The ape was in the friar's bed
And sleepin' as the sleepin' dead;
His corpus, frae the heid to taes,
Weel rowl'd up underneath the claes.
And if the blankets met their gaze
As they pass'd in, these monks sedate
Thocht naethin' o' their touzled state.
They little kenn'd that 'neath the heap
Their deil was lyin' fast asleep.
The can'les, forty pound, lang threes,
Were rang'd in order and ableeze.
The recitation and the chant
Proceeded, tremblin' first a wee,
Till frae a' interruption free
They grew mair loud and jubilant.

The voices rowl'd, and growl'd, and tore,
And thunder'd, threaten'd, curs'd, and swore,
Doon to the nether regions' door.
'Twas evident that *he* was skeer'd,
If no'—why had he no' appear'd?
And sae they wark'd wi' might and main,
The doups blew out and lit again,
The incense in the censers swung,
The big bells and the sma' were rung;
The de'il was daur'd to do his warst,
And a' made sure he was dispars'd.

The ape was wauken'd wi' the din,
He put his heid oot to the chin;
I needn't say he was surprees'd,
The haill ten dizzen can'les bleez'd.
And forty monks, their backs to him,
Were strainin' voice and wind and limb;
Och, what the mischief could it mean?
He couldna tell, but thocht, I know,
It was a maist attractive show,
A maist refin'd, divartin' scene.
He sat up fully, greatly pleas'd,
Some irritation then, I s'pose,
Or whiff o' incense caught his nose,
At any rate he cough'd and sneez'd.
The monks a' turn'd—
I hae nae pen
To paint ye just what happen'd then.
If but the prenter wad leave clear
Some twa or three clean pages here
Ye could then fill in for yersel'
Far mair than I hae pow'r to tell.
The fiend, the awfu' human shape,
Wi' diabolic countenance
Stood up and mock'd them wi' a dance,
And finish'd wi' a bow and scrape.

He mock'd at the attempted ban,
He mock'd them in the shape o' man,
He mock'd them in their monkish dress,
And then, wi' hellish wickedness,
A burnt hole show'd in his attire,
Suggestin' baith the PIT and FIRE!
O sure ye'll pity their dismay,
They came to disparse *him*, and they,
Puir craturs, were dispars'd theirsel's.
They say their fearfu' cries and yells,
Heart-rendin', fearsome, horrific,
Were heard twa mile alang the shore.
The myst'ry is how one sma' door
Let forty fat monks out sae quick.

The elders, in despair and gloom,
Met, once again, in Lindric's room,
And one, the anshentest auld man,
Gi'ed his opeenion and a plan.
"The deefficulty was nae met,"
Quo' he, "because we didna get
The Latin words in soon enough."
(The twa I tell't ye were sae tough.)
"The haily water, too," quo' he,
Was sair negleckit, ye'll agree;
I saw it as I left the door
Still ootside in the corridor.
Noo what I wad adveese this time
Is this—o' coorse I may be wrang—
Get in twa masons, stoot and strang,
Wi' plenty o' guid stane and lime,
And pile it in the corridor;
Then some o' us, nae need for a',
Will rowl the Latin tight and sma',
And fling it thro' the open door.

Then wi' the door still open wide,
I'd lash the haily water thro',
The haill three blessit buckets fu',
And never put a foot inside.
I then wad mak' the masons start
And build the door up, quick and smart.
Then see that naebody gangs by
The door or any places nigh
Till guid twal' days are at your back,
To gi'e the vartue time to ack."

The scheme was weel approv'd. The stane
And lime were carried in that night,
Next day the door was built up tight,
And never open'd once again.
A fortnight later a' was right,
Nae langer soon's disturb'd the night;
The abbot saw wi' thankfulness
The scheme was crownit wi' success,
Had acted perfeck—'twas agreed.
And why?—Because the ape was deid.

Sure never was there sic a stour
Rais'd by a puir caricature,
Or copy o' the human shape,
A puir, onclean, onseemly ape.
Built up there in the friar's cell,
He tried a while to feed himsel'
On doups—and took 'mang ither things,
To fill his stamach's achin' void,
Three rowls o' pairchment wi' the strings,
This brought on *paralgeminoid*
O' the *marcuriopticise,*
Th' immediate cause o' his demise.

Which sad event, I may here say
Took place on the eleventh day,
Preceesely at the hour o' four,
And close ahint the built-up door.
Ye needna wonder that I ken
Just what he died o', where, and when.
A man that stories tells or sings
Has private ways o' larnin' things.

And what became o' Friar John?
This was the question occupied
The minds o' many far and wide,
As days and months and years roll'd on.
Some held to it thro' thick and thin,
He had committed mortal sin;
And on that night he disappear'd
He was to nether regions steer'd
By—him, ye ken, that clank'd the chain,
And sae was never seen again.
Ithers there were, and no' a few
That took direck the contrar' view.
"Frae ill," they said, "the Lord on high
Doth some translat, they dinna die."
The facks are, readers, kenn'd by you,
But that which follows may be new.
Far frae the scene o' this my tale
A tall thin man and deathly pale
Was on the roadside found as deid.
The winter had come on wi' speed,
The earth was iron-bound and dry,
Held in by ice's prison bars,
And crystaleez'd and frozen stars
Were winkin' in the cauld black sky.
And he that found the famish'd wight
Was smit wi' pity at his plight.

He bore him in his strang airms hame,
And there the puir, stiff, famish'd frame
Revivit in the warmth and light;
The stranger's looks were worn and wild,
Yet was he gentle as a child.
He stay'd wi' his kind hosts a wee,
And while he rested they could see
The Lord had bless'd them for the sake
O' him wha wi' them did partake.
As He in David's time did mark
Wi' His esteem by gains profuse,
The guid auld Obed-edom's hoose,
Because he entertain'd the ark.
When he was ask'd his name to say,
He ca'd himself "The Castaway."
And here in these lone pairts for years
He shar'd the poorer people's tears;
Were any sick, he wept and pray'd,
He comforted were any deid,
And when they shelter gave or breid
He little took nor lang time stay'd,
But aye mov'd on and on and on:
And I believe that nameless soul
That scorn'd not peasant hame or dole,
Was Prince wi' God and FRIAR JOHN.

XIV

BLETHERS

LET us consider the subject of blethers after the manner of the old divines, with a prelusive inquiry into the origin of the word, a divisional treatment of the corpus of the study, and such laudatory remarks on the virtues of judicious fooling as may correspond to the application of the old preachment. Objection may be taken to this order of consideration as placing the horse's head where his tail should be: on the plea that description of a thing and of its uses should precede the finding of a derivation for its name. The answer to such objection is that he who knows a subject from tail to head knows it equally from head to tail.

The difficulty in this inquiry is to discover the primary sense of the word. Let us search the vocabularies of old and cognate tongues for a parent to our blether. The Icelandic *bletr* is a splash. Is this the word we seek, making the blether person a splasher, and blethers his noisy, untactful sayings and doings? Or have the ages added an "r" to the Anglo-Saxon *bleetha*, an eruption, the blether being the man or the thing that irritated like an itch? In the same language *blithr* means gay, merry, and force is given to arguments in favour of this as the early blether by the fact that the English still say "blithering idiot" where we say "blethering fool." But whereas the English form has, long ago, parted with all trace of primary meaning, and conveys only the idea of incompetence and folly, Ulster "blethering"

stands yet for the occasional and deliberate merry abandon of the sane as well as for the unconscious silliness of the silly. Some, and they are learned, give our word the same root as that of the Danish *bloese*, meaning to blow, to sound as a trumpet, to noise abroad, to proclaim, and it is true that the blether person blows, sounds a trumpet (his own), noises abroad, and proclaims. Others, again, make the word an imitative one, saying that blethering is the old *blaetan*, a bleating, and the blether a bleater, a maker of noise continuous, and, to the ears of men, aimless and senseless. William de Shoreham uses the word *bleddre* where we would write blunder, and this *bleddre* of his may well be ours, for the blether (man) is more often than not a blunderer.

There are philologists who look not to the cold north and west, but to the warm east for our word's origin. The thing signified, they say, existed from the very beginning, and they trace the word that signifies to distant places and very early times. In Arabic the word *balagh* means to be eloquent. If you wish to pronounce it correctly you must rattle the "gh" quickly like a guttural "r." Try this several times as fast as you can and see if you have not the old familiar "blether" on your tongue. Now by a process common in language a word denoting quality may take a secondary meaning denoting the quality in excess. "Soft" is an example. There is nothing derogatory in speaking of a person as of soft, gentle character; such an one may be rigid at a time to be rigid. Say that he is "soft" and you mean that he is *too* soft, mentally invertebrate, senseless. In *balagh*, then, you have not only the sound but the sense of blether, for what better describes the blether than the word carrying the meaning of too eloquent? But if we go to Arabia, preference should perhaps be given to a derivation from *balat*, a paving stone. The connection appears to be very remote; it is not really so. In Ulster it is common for a person to profess that he has been "knocked down" by a statement. The "taller"

or more blethering the statement the more likely is it to knock one down. A paving stone is a handy thing with which to knock down. *Balat* is a paving stone, and *balat*, figuratively, is the blether that knocks down, floors, flabbergasts. Let us travel still further.

The doubtful authority of Quinapalus may be cited in favour of derivation from a very ancient eastern word meaning leaves, and, figuratively, the light and unfruitful in conduct and character. The same audacious (and doubtful) authority would have us to accept the statement that this ancient word was sounded, as nearly as possible, as we pronounce blethers, and it is pointed out that the word for leaves in some languages still with us has very nearly the same sound (German *blätter*). The reader who receives this may not find it difficult to believe that the word and its sounding come from the cradle of our race—from the place where leaves were the things most numerous and noticeable—the Garden of Eden. What more natural than that the fruitless, nothing but leaves, should appear to our fruit-eating parents as fittest figure for the impractical or useless in speech and conduct, the show without the substance, the unfruitful in talk or action. The word may have lived without change from Eden to our time, possibly because of woman's frequent use of and fondness for it. In historic times wives have frequently met the closely-reasoned arguments of husbands by the one word "blethers," and the writer referred to holds it more than probable that after many a discourse of the patient Adam, the same word, full of the same idea, fell from the playful lips of Eve.

Let not such wonderful antiquity for this Ulster word be deemed an impossibility. The Marquis of Dufferin took from an Egyptian tomb many thousands of years old, a stonecutter's mallet identical in size and shape with those in daily use at the present time. Persistence of sound and idea are not more remarkable than persistence of form, and

the word may be a great exception, one, perhaps the only one, which has travelled changeless through the ages, the only one we hear which the roses of Eden heard.

It would be improper to conceal the fact that these suggested origins find little favour in the eyes of some persons reputed to be sensible. They apply the term we are discussing to such researches as have occupied our attention; holding, in this case, all wandering through ancient or distant fields to be unnecessary and superfluous. They say that the word is very near us; is, in fact, "bladder," standing primarily for the simple allantois of the calf or pig, a thing of the market value of fourpence, such sum belonging by prescriptive right to the children of the house to which the beast belonged. And they say that such object, distended with air, looking large with little weight, used for blows that do not hurt, and making with a few dried peas a tremendous noise, stands figuratively for the person or speech or character showy and specious but deficient in weight and seriousness. It remains for the reader, from materials here supplied, to select such derivation of the word as may please him best, while we proceed to discourse, under heads, on that for which the word stands. As a noun the word may be singular or plural, and there is a verb "to blether."

Firstly, there are blethers who are persons. The blether is a fool, but as the children said of Jamie Hunter, "no' a muckle one"; he is a fool with flickerings of sense. A nice understanding of the term as applied to a person carries rather more the idea of his overmuch and tactless speaking than of unwisdom in his acts. The blether may indeed walk circumspectly, but his speech bewrayeth him. An "ould blether" is not necessarily a person of advanced years; the qualifying power of the adjective not being in the line of antiquity. The addition gives enlargement, and the "ould blether" is simply a bigger fool than his unqualified brother. Overmuch wisdom in the voice is almost as bad as too little,

for be a man never so wise, if his talk is not understanded of the people he is a blether to them. Carlyle was a blether; so, too, was Ruskin.

Secondly, there are the blethers of the blether, the acts and sayings and possibly even the property, of one who is a fool in any degree. To this class belong the airs put on by madam because the cousin of her aunt's half-sister is married to the brother of a baronet, the pretensions to boredom and man-of-the worldism of turnip-headed youth, the complacent self-gratulation of the conceited, the fatuous vapourings of the blockhead. The inanimate may be blether by relation, as in the case of apparatus and instruments owned by a gentleman who thought himself scientific when his neighbours rated him soft-headed. The rain-gauges, anemometers, and other things attached to his house were always known to the world adjacent as "his blethers." And the inanimate may be blether by inefficiency; example, the patented (and ineffective) horticultural appliances of a certain noble lord, admittedly no fool, which appliances were invariably termed by the gardening staff "his lordship's blethers."

Thirdly, There are the blethers of love. The class is large, and includes endearing expressions, letters, kisses, embraces, hand-pressures and any or every manifestation of love, spurious or genuine. The applicability of the word is however regulated by the attitude of the person using it. Ann Jane, feeling the arm of William round her waist and doubtful of the seriousness of his intentions, repulses him with "Nane of your blethers." Let William prove his sincerity and Ann Jane be willing, she will no longer apply the term to sweet words and the contact of loving hands and faces; but to Ann Jane's brother, aged sixteen, these and the long-drawn-out partings he witnesses in the gloaming remain "blethers" of the rankest description.

Fourthly and lastly, there are the blethers of sanity. Round every one of us is a wall, more or less high, of the

artificial and conventional, and inside it we tramp round and round, bearing our burdens and feeling within us all the time the instinct of an old freedom, an instinct that may date from the days when the vestigial coccyx was a thing to wave gracefully. Whether we have upward climbed from ape, or dropped from angel down, this is certain, that our progenitors of a long way back lived a life freer and less complex than ours. In trees or in the ether they disported, and stirrings from their time move us even now as we march in tracks, harnessed to the awful things we have discovered or invented, and serve the gods of business or profession which our own hands have created. And when the wall seems to be higher than usual, the harness and load heavier and the gods more exacting, we stop, we kick, we reverse, we decline to serve. The pure fool is free and knows not law, and we for our saving become amateur fools, and for a while, in some way that hurts not ourselves or others, play a fool's tricks. Acts that hurt the person or dignity, our own or of others, are not allowable. Mr. Sutherland Edwards in his reminiscences tells of one Bower, of Paris, who, stirred by the common instinct of humanity to spurn the fetters of convention, went up to two respectable ladies who were sitting in a carriage before a stationer's shop, gravely pinched the leg of one, and then bowing gracefully, retired. On another occasion, seeing a very pompous-looking old gentleman in the street, he seized him by the back of the neck and the widest part of his trousers, and ran him briskly along the pavement for fifty yards. Then he raised his hat, bowed, and went away. However satisfying these exercises may have been to Mr. Bower, they must have caused surprise and pain to the persons who participated involuntarily, and are therefore to be classed as "larks." They are not the blethers of sanity, harmless, necessary, hygienic.

To the virtues and varieties of sane blethers no number can be set. After a suitable exercise the whole system is

new-strung, the physical, mental, and spiritual are strengthened and invigorated, the sight is cleared, and surrounding objects take their true form and perspective. The mountain that seemed to overhang retires to the background, the precipice becomes an easy slope, and the fierce lion of the way takes the air and proportions of a harmless ass. No physician is needed to prescribe a course, the patient must do that for himself. Generally speaking it is proper to do the improper, it is fit to do what is unfit for your position —always innocently and harmlessly, of course. Be noisy, be quiet, be reckless, be "agin' the government," do the useless, the inconsequential, the ridiculous. Don't be virtuous, and you will be happy; virtuous here has the sense of conventional. If reserve and solemn demeanour are associated with you, be, for a time, a merryandrew. If you are naturally noisemaking and talkative, look solemn and be silent for half-an-hour. You will chuckle internally. Many valuable exercises will require privacy if you do not wish to acquire practical knowledge of present-day treatment of the insane. If you are a person of no voice, the singing of a difficult operatic air is a very fine blether. For obvious reasons this exercise requires space, the top of a lonely mountain is good. Retire and reappear to bow at least seven times in response to imaginary calls. As you come down from the mountain your tread will be firmer, your mental cuticle will glow as glows the physical after a cold bath and rough towel, your whole system has undergone molecular change, and the bacillus of the blues, disgusted with his new environment, will alight from you as quickly as a man from the step of the wrong tramcar. Let the variety of your blether be suited to your occupation. Lawyers, wearied of whereases, aforesaids, hereditaments, reservations, heirs, executors, and assigns, sit down and write to a brother practitioner your opinion of him. Tell him he is a fool or a cheat, or both. Then

seal your letter carefully and address it, and—*very* carefully —put it behind the fire. This is a very pleasant divertisement. Judges, sitting as gods, electrify the bar and recreate yourselves by asking explanations of things known to the normal child of three. That one of you recently asked in an Irish court for the meaning of the term "the ace of spades" shows that you "know your" blethers. Doctors, statesmen, teachers, men of trade, blethers are better for your anxieties than "hittin' a wee ba' over sand dunes," or the turning of yourselves into pipe-stoves. It may be that one shall come to his blether with mind too troubled and anxious to permit of benefit from the exercise, as the stomach may come to the dinner without power to assimilate. In such cases it is desirable to procure a fitter frame of mind by the calm consideration of wise sequences of words designed to make us feel what small space and time are ours, how insignificant our variations, how little "it all" matters—Marcus Aurelius is good, but what follows is perhaps better.

Alpha Centauri is twenty-eight million million miles away, and is next door even at that.

Duke, chemically analysed, shows a volume in the average body—say eleven stones—of H_2O—50,500 grammes. Eleven stones of washerwoman is found to yield exactly same quantity of this constituent.

The Sikeses were on the earth as soon as the Percys.

Add a hundred years to your age, and, as far as this world's riches go, you are even with any man.

A big man can live in a very small house.

There is a public right-of-way to heaven.

The sun will not rise earlier for your wedding nor delay his setting for your funeral. The river flowed on after Quidnunkis fell in.

The beauty of the prescription is that it is fitted to be effective in exactly opposite states. The red inflammation of pride and the paralysis of poor spirit find their correctives.

Are you a noble, a millionaire, a giant in intellect? Alpha Centauri, the nearest thing outside your system is twenty-eight million million miles away, and, magnificent as it is, is but a bit of diamond dust on a strand of infinite creation. What then are you? Are you a poor beggar whose heart palpitates as you are ushered into the presence of a fellow-man? You are part of a creation to man inconceivably great; there is a use for you or you would not have been made. Be abased then, proud man; be stirred up, poor man. And both of you enjoy your blethers. And ye with the cure of souls, are ye debarred of access to the vivifying blether? By no means. True, the tragedies of life are bared to you as they are not to other men. Much of your work is too solemn for association with even innocent folly. Recreative nonsense will not heal the broken heart; the path of evil is not smoothed by it; the gloom of the grave is not lightened thereby. But ye are human; for you there are ofttimes tired heads, sore hearts, and even wounded vanities, and, for these, blethers are a sovereign balm. To avoid even the appearance of evil it is proper to take your blethers with closed doors or in your own garden. Address your cabbages as dearly beloved brethren, and exhort them to growth in the right way and improvement in head and heart. Or as a subdued tone of clothing and conversation mark your daily life, a great relief may be found in a little impropriety of dress or speech. A very small boy, with too early hankering after the knowledge of evil, begged his nurse to tell him some bad words. He wanted to know them, he said, so that he might avoid saying them. The girl might have told him that there was no fear of his saying what he did not know, but, wearied with his pertinacity, she said, "Oh, you mustn't say Tibby Jabs." Not long after he was refused permission, unjustly, he believed, to do something he wished to do, and in hot anger and rebellion he said he would do it in defiance of the powers, and to be yet more vile in

authority's eyes he cried, "And I'll say Tibby Jabs, Tibby Jabs, Tibby Jabs, Tibby Jabs." Here, dear reverends, is a word to your hand—innocent even to babes, and yet associated with revolt against cramping conditions. When wearied with the load of troubles, your own and other people's, retire to a garret, replace the collar of your priesthood by a large red tie, speak disrespectfully of the equator, say Tibby Jabs. Then reverse established order by putting your head and hands to the ground and your feet in the air. Or if by reason of your being what Dean Hole calls "a capacious gentleman" this movement should be attended by difficulty or danger, lie down on your back and fancy yourself the freed horse whose "iron-arm'd hoof gleam'd in the morning ray." Throw up your arms and heels and roll over from side to side. This is an exercise of most excellent quality, designed to take a pucker out of the brow and put it in the cheek, where it can do no harm. As a stay to arterial degeneration it has no equal.

Pat has his trials and troubles; he knows the joy of work, and knows, too, the weariness of it. When the burden is heavy, instinct calls to him to go out to the fields and gallop like a young foal or sit through the night in the open beside a fire of his kindling, a desire coming perhaps from the time when his progenitors dwelt not in ceiled houses. He may not do these things, for by them lies the road to the lunatic asylum. But, in a "Battle of Moyvore," he can conceive of six people wrestling for an hour on the top of a midden, of the "haythen gods" taking delight in such a row, of his reverence sitting in judgment on the aggressors, of an absurd claim for mitigation of damages, or he can address an ode to a fat man, and gravely explain what are the two kinds of hail—all this without danger to his reputation for sanity and with great benefit to his (own) spirit. He knows the recuperative power of a fine blether,

"Which bars a thousand harms and lengthens life."

BLETHERS

WHEN care his load o' trouble dumps
And buries ye completely,
And fortune gi'es unkindly thumps
Where ance she smilit sweetly.
Och dinna let them see ye greet,
They baith hae got their tethers;
Man! tak' the bitter wi' the sweet
And hae recoorse to blethers.

Are yours the wakefu' nights that creep
When een are sair wi' weepin',
And prickles in the pillow keep
The weary head frae sleepin'?
Why should ye toss on thorny bed
When ye can rest on feathers?
Throw oot the thorns and hae instead
A pillow stuffed wi' blethers.

Why should ye hug your pain and moan,
And sup your parritch sourly?
Why should ye pech and grunt and groan,
And gi'e the ghaist up hourly?
There's no an ill the deevil sends
'Twixt bonnet and shoe leathers,
Nae ache or pain atween these ends
But can be cur'd by blethers.

Ye maunna' tak' blue-mouldy jokes,
Sour rubbish frae the papers;
Leave them to stooter-stamach'd folks
And cut a wheen o' capers.

To some lone desert place repair,
And on your back there lyin'
Fling airms and heels up in the air,
Then—to the de'il wi' sighin'.

Or on some tap o' mountain high
That's far frae hoose or city,
Wi' naethin' nearer than the sky
Just sing a wee bit ditty.
Just scraich awa' like forty throats,
The tune may be onsartin',
But then, the waur ye tak' the notes
'Twill be the mair divartin'.

'Twill be as weel to let the air
Be o' yer ain composin',
And discords dibbled here and there
Will mak' it mair imposin'.
O sweet's the air on mountain lan',
A healthy scent's the heather's,
And ye'll come doon a healthy man,
Thanks to fresh air and blethers.

Or gang before a lookin'-glass
And flout the fellow in it,
Say he's oncommon like an ass,
Ye'd fight him in a minute.
Pretend to hit him on the nose,
And ca' him mollycoddle,
He'll try to hit ye, but the blows
Will never reach your noddle.

Pit oot yer tongue at him, and chaff
And girn for a' you're able,
Until ye mak' the beggar laugh
Like—him that gangs in sable.

This is a maist successfu' plan,
And usefu' in a' weathers;
Try it, ye puir, thin, weary man,
And ye'll bless me and—blethers.

THE BATTLE OF MOYVORE

I

I've looked in the books for a tale of the fight, I've found a tale of the Nore;
The Waterloo scrimmage is there all right, and Blenheim, and many more;
But nivir a word o' the vict'ry won by Biddy M'Glynn at Moyvore.

II

O that was a fight, if ivir was wan, that was the kind of a row
That would ha' delighted the haythen gods if they had been livin' now;
Pity ould Homer can't tell the tale, for, bedad, he's the boy knows how.

III

The cause of it all was this, I am towld: young Denis, in one o' his freaks
(Denis was nephew to Biddy M'Glynn), put tar on young Callaghan's breeks,
And the bargin' and ragin' that cum o' that act wint on widout ceasin' for weeks.

IV

Young Denis's mother, a widdy she was—Mulvany had left her poor,
So she liv'd wid her son and her sister Bid in a cottage beyant the moor:
A dacent wee bit of a cottage it was, wid a midden in front o' the dure.

V

And aback o' the midden, broad and green, there stud a convanient pool,
Mebbe as deep in the middle it was as the height of a three-legg'd stool—
A place where the ducks divarted thimselves, and the children comin' from school.

VI

Callaghan didn't want a row, but his missis she giv' him no rest.
"Before I fight two ould weemin," sez he, "I'll see myself dead an'—blest;"
But aftherwards he repinted and wint—second thoughts isn't always best.

VII

The Callaghans cum wid rage in their hearts one cloudy midsummer night,
On the top o' the midden they tuk their stand, and batther'd wid all their might
Wid stones at the dure o' Mrs. M'Glynn—but she wudn't cum out to fight.

VIII

They smash'd the windies iviry wan, they scatther'd the peats about;
They pranc'd on the top o' the midden like mad, wid many a jeer and flout
At Mrs. Mulvany and Biddy M'Glynn—but still they wudn't cum out.

IX

Wee Paddy wint close to a windy at last, and bang'd a big turnip through;
It sthruck the things on the chimley-piece, and shiver'd a plaster coo,
A lukin'-glass, and a rod-nos'd dog, and a chaney shepherd or two,

X

It bounc'd on the top o' the clane bed quilt, where Biddy had laid her hat;
"I can stan' a lot of abuse," sez she, "but I'll nivir put up wid that;
Sich trouble as this for a spot o' tar on the breeks o' that impident brat."

XI

She saiz'd a [flat iron convanient at han', and out she wint wid a rush;
And Mrs. Mulvany she armed herself wid a bit of a good whin bush,
And Denis he thought that the beetle perhaps for a weapon would do at a push.

XII

They wrastled about on the top o' the heap for fully an hour by the clock,
And Biddy's flat iron it work'd like a charm; it was purty sevare at a knock—
I'm tould whin it lit on Callaghan's fut it was raythera sarious shock.

XIII

At the end of an hour it was Callaghan's fate to tumble into the pool,
Wid a broken toe and a bleedin' nose his ardour comminc'd to cool—
As he rose, like Vaynus out o' the say, he felt he had play'd the fool.

XIV

"This isn't lavender wather," sez he, "but thin in this mortial life
We don't jist get what we lek," sez he—sez Callaghan to his wife:
"I'm broken and bate; I'll bate a retrate, I've had enough o' this strife."

XV

So he hobbled away, for his toe was sore, it caused him both pain and woe,
It didn't get well and had to come off—the doctors decided so—
And Callaghan walks in society now wantin' that middle toe.

XVI

This come to the ears o' Father O'Flynn, and he got in a terrible wax,
He sent at wanst for Biddy M'Glynn, and tould her to state the facks,
And from Callaghan and his wife and son he had some questions to ax.

XVII

His riverence tackled it mighty larn'd—I had the whole story from Pat—
The boy, although he is Callaghan's child, is a most intilligint brat—
"He called it a casus belly," * sez he, "whativer he man'd by that.

XVIII

"'It's you,' to my feyther he sez, sez he—'it's you is the wan to blame,
And twinty-six shillin's at laste,' sez he, 'is the damages I will name—
Ye'll pay it down on the nail at wanst, and ye ought to give more for shame.'

XIX

"'I lost a part o' me fut in the fight,' my feyther sez, 'as ye know;
Wud ye plaze to knock off a thrifle for that—a couple o' shillin's or so.'
'O divil a rap,' his riverence said, 'divil a rap for yer toe.

* His reverence had alluded to the *casus belli*.

XX

"'If ye let the weemin direct ye, lad, ye'll find ye will hev to pay;
It's as ould as the toime o' Adam and Eve—this leadin' o' men astray.
I'll give ye a bit of advice,' sez he, 'DO NOTHIN' THE WEEMIN SAY.'"

ODE TO A PRATIE

THY name is Murphy. On the Antrim hills
There's cruffles and white-rocks; there's skerries, too, and dukes,
And kidneys—which is early; and champions and flukes—
Which doesn't help the farmer much to pay his bills:
The sort's not recommended. Then there's early rose,
And forty-folds, and flounders—which is bad;
And magnum bonums:—if good seed's to be had
It is the biggest pratie that the country grows,
And tastes not bad. Some grows best in rigs
And some in drills. There's sorts ye cudn't ate;
There's others dry and floury that's a trate;
And weeshy kinds, that's only fit for pigs.
Some likes a sandy sile and some a turfy,
Others do their best in good stiff clay:
There's new varieties appearin' iv'ry day;
But, as I said, thy fam'ly name is Murphy.

Swate lump, thou art beluv'd. Folks dress'd in silk,
And them in tatthers, too raggit to be seen,
Agree to ate ye. Our own beluvit Queen,*
She takes her pratie with a sup o' milk;

* Written before the death of Queen Victoria.

She's homely in her ways. On his goolden throne
The Zar o' Rooshia, whin he's freezin' cowld,
Calls for a plateful o' ye—so I'm towld.
And in her wee bit cabin, Peg Malone—
God bless the cratur—she ates praties too;
She takes her fingers, while the Duke o' York
And sich like gintry maybe use a fork.
I don't know much o' what the big folks do,
But all extol thy vartues and exalt
Thy fame. I s'pose I needn't say,
Like many a thing we hear o' iv'ry day,
It's best to take ye with a grain o' salt.

ODE TO A FAT MAN

HAIL to thee, fat man! Hail, all hail!
I winna fail
To gi'e ye what is sartinly your due.
A hail or two
Is neither here nor there,
Sae I'll no' spare
The hail! but maybe I should say
That hail is various. On a winter day
One sort gangs pepperin' alang the roads,
Maistly wi' wind;
The ither kind
Is what I use; the kind for makin' odes.
Hail to thee, fat man! Hail again!
I should explain
That I'm nae Quaker tho' I say thou, thee.
You see
An ode is po'try weel mixed wi' hail,
But hailin' only is o' sma' avail;

You've got to squeeze
In thou's and thee's.
And don't, O don't, forget your O's.
A face without a nose
Wad be as seemly as an O-less ode.
The parfit mode
For odes is deeficult to catch—
But do as I do—obsarve and watch.
Wi' this example then, and what I tell,
Mak' odes to please yersel'.
I'll gi'e a specimen in this next line:
Hail to thee, all hail, O man o' fat!
There—just like that—
Isn't it fine?

Noo we'll begin,
'Twad be a sin
To let a man so great as you,
That is—as thou, pass thro'
This mortial life and tread its road
Withoot an ode,
Or even two.
Hail to thee, O fat man! What a prize
You'd tak' in show-time if ye were a pig;
Say, hoo the mischeef did ye grow that size?
Sae stoot, sae ponderiferous, sae big!
P'raps you'll explain,
Did Nature turn ye oot an ord'nar' wean—
Ye did the rest yersel'?
Do tell.
I'd like to ken,
Or, was she makin' elephants that day,
And hadn't got her hand back to the way,
And quantity for men?

All hail, O fat man! once again
I will invoke the muse and sing,
Troth, that's a thing
I had forgotten to explain.
The poets larn'd
In makin' odes invoke the muse,
And sing. Where I'm consarn'd
You must excuse
The singin'. It's in a figger that I sing aboot
Your tailor and your claes;
Nae fifty shillin' suit
Wad cover ye half-ways,
I'm sure it wadn't look at ye—or thee,
Ye buy a couple at a time—maybe?
And sew them into one without regard
To style, provided ye can clothe your back?
Or, is't a maitter o' contrack,
Sae much per square yard?
A tailor's tape
Is useless wi' sic hugious shape,
I s'pose he measures wi' a piece o' string,
You haud it here while he walks there;
I declare
The problems o' your coat and breeks are past
A' comprehension. That corporation vast
Is like the dome o' great St. Paul's,
I saw *it* once. Raly, your weskit calls
For varses for itsel', but time wad fail
To sing (accordin' to its size) its praise;
Frae its great area ye cud cut claes
For families. All hail!

O thou monstracious, hugious, strange!
Sae lairge a bit o' Nature's wark
(I pit it that way for a change),
I maun remark,

I won't gang wi' ye in a boat
Unless ye promise, sure, to sit
Fair in the middle. Thinkin' o't
There's ower great a risk in it,
I'll tak' that back.
Ye michtna sit just quite exack,
And then the boat wad coup for sure.
It wad be pure
And simple foolishness to sail
Wi' you. All hail! All hail!
(I need the hails there for the rhyme).
Sae let me tell
Ye this my frien'. If onytime
Ye feel desire to be afloat,
Insure the boat,
And gang yersel'.

O' many a thing
I'd like to sing.
I'd like to ask ye to explain
What coorse ye tak' when needs arise
To mak' a journey by the train.
Questions crap up o' wecht and size,
And thro' rates by the ton,
And when the journey's done,
They coont, nae doot, for wear and tear,
And ax ye somethin' for repair
And maintenance o' road.
I'll hae' to mak' anither day,
Anither ode.
Ye're growin' bigger every day,
Therefore I feel impell'd to say,
And say it pintedly—Have you
Conseeder'd there are limits to

The width o' doors,
The breadth o' stairs,
The strength o' floors,
The size o' chairs,
And if convarsant wi' the facks,
Parfit and clear,
I ax
If wishfu' to avoid mishap
Whaur, neebur, are ye gaun to stap?
For I stap here.

AN ACT OF PARLIAMENT WANTED

I WANT an act, a wee short act, pit thro' the Parliament,
His Majesty wad gie't nae doot his fu' and free assent,
Empo'orin' me wi' botanists and sich like folk to dale
Wi' raison and persuasion and a gun and pickle hail.

It might be ca'ed for title short, in case o' reference,
"An act enablin' farmer folk and men o' common-sense
To dale wi' botanists and sich by shootin' them at sight"
(Fu' title o' an Act I'm towld wad tak' an hour to write).

I wad dae naethin' hairsh or rough, I'd raison wi' a gun,
A shot gun wi' a guid wide bore and duck shot No. 1,
I'd argue gintly at the first wi' half an ounce or so,
And raise it to a quarter pun' whaur intellecks were slow.

The raison for this raisonin' wi' botanists is this,
They will parsist in sayin' things and doin' things amiss,
The langwidge they mak' use o' before wee modest plants,
Is maist discreditable to these thochtless veesitants.

A frien' o' mine a wee bit moss that grew on Trostan's side
Was sae insultit by a man (a botanist), she died.
"Ye're a *Trichostomum*, so ye are," sez he; "and that's yer name;"
She tuk it sair to heart, she did, and died frae verra shame.

The langwidge others o' them use betokens morals lax;
Seligeria pusilla, Rhabdoweissia fugax,
I've heerd them gi'e bad tongue like that to puir wee innocents,
Hech sirs, I think ye will agree they need admonishments.

There's lots o' sturdy beggar plants like thistle, nettle, scutch,
Nae feelin's fine hae they to wound, nae pride hae they to touch.
They'll mak' a leevin' onywhere, and find their bit and scrap,
And if ye ca' them blackguard names they dinna care a rap.

But tender bits o' moss and fern wi' scarce a healthy blade,
Genteel remains o' families noo verra much decay'd,
That find it verra deefficult to mak' a leevin' here,
Is't ony wonder that they die, dry up and disappear?

The botanist, ill-daein' chiel, he'll root them oot o' bed,
And no' content wi' sayin' things that oughtn't to be said,
He'll send them shiverin' wi' cowld withoot a stitch o' claes
Awa' to some ould Musy Um * to die in twa three days.

I want an act, a wee short act, pit through the Parliament,
Wi' po'or to use, wi' botanists, a shot gun airgument,
I'd like it widely to be known for sure an' sartin fact
That gin they winna grant the boon *I'll act withoot the Act.*

* Museum.

A CHANGE OF STYLE

THEY tell me, in these rhymes o' mine the words are ower sma',
That sprats o' but one syllable hae got nae wecht ava,
The clothin' wi' them thochts I hae, is like, my critic says,
The sendin' lads to mak' their way in ill-cut country claes.

That man nae doot, he kens the warld. It's aye the way wi' it,
To pit the thing that mak's a noise before the thing that's fit;
It's hard tho', when wee bastes o' words can carry meanin' right,
I maun set hippopotami to pu' wi' a' their might.

What maun be, maun be, I suppose. Demand will hae supply,
The error o' my rhymin' ways I'll try to "rectify";
I'll gi'e nae man a common name, I'll use an "epithet";
If lang words will mak' poetry, I'll be a poet yet.

Nae mair for me the bird his nest will big * in field or tree,
Troth no', he won't—he'll "nidify"—or hear o' it frae me,
And folk that used to tak' a drink will noo hae to "imbibe,"
And I'm no' gaun to write again—hereafter I "inscribe."

A' fusty wi' the want o' use, in cupboards o' my brain
I hae a heap o' heavy words—I'll clane them up again,
They're mighty little use to man as far as I can see,
But if they mak' for poetry—it's a' the same to me.

There's "ratiocination" will try their lugs a wee,
"Exacerbate" 's a word I'll use ye dinna aften see,
And "latitudinarian" they canna ca' a sprat;
Man! folk could lose their latitude in sic a word as that.

* Build.

We'll no' get hungry ony mair—for by the new decree
"Esurient" at denner time is what we'll hae to be.
And if ye'd save your—cuticle (I nearly said your skin)
When shavin' dinna cut—I mean—don't "scarify" your chin.

I'll ca' the weel-kenn'd pratie noo, a tuberous delight,
And him that ates—"rhizophagous"—think ye wad that be right?
A tuber's no' a root they say—sae mebbe this is wrang,
A thorny path is his wha mak's the words he uses lang.

And while I'll gi'e the public a' the lengthy words it needs,
I'll e'en invent a wheen mysel, big rowlin' rumblin' screeds,
Words no' to find in dictionaire or ony book ava,
I hae a'ready thocht o' ane that's like a waterfa'.

There's mair tho' in't, the critic says, than words surpassin' big,
When folk gae readin' poetry—he says they like to dig.
The pickle sense ocht aye to be a dearly purchas'd fruit,
I ocht to pit it undergrun' and let them scart it oot.

But s'pose that ere they find the prize the diggin' ardour's cool'd.
Suppose they find a stane or shell where I hae berried goold,
Suppose they scart for half a day whaur I hae naethin' hid,
Will that no' mak' them hate the sicht o' a' I ever did?

It's mebbe wise to wait a wee and hae mair evidence
Aboot this rowlin' up o' thocht and hidin' o' the sense,
I'm fear'd I'm rather auld the noo to mak' the change in style,
I'll sleep on it a nicht or twa and think it ow'r the while.

THE LASS THAT WAD A LADDIE BE

My mither wants to mairry me,
I dinna want to wed,
I want to see the warl' a wee
And roam a bit instead.
O michty me, the peety o't,
That I should be a she,
That I should be a petticoat
I dinna want to be.

They praise me for my figure slim
And sparkle o' my ee,
But een that sparkle will grow dim,
And figure's apt to flee.
O michty me, &c.

It's some mistak' o' Providence
That made o' me a lass,
I want to be o' consequence
And no' a cuddy ass.
O michty me, &c.

O wae's me that a length o' life
Should ever mak' o' me
A doited, silly, fat auld wife
The like o' what I see.
O michty me, &c.

Just think o' it! set doon to scrub
Wi' besom and wi' pails,
Or weshin' duddies at a tub
In kilted draggle-tails.
O michty me, &c.

My brither should ha' been the lass
And I should ha' been he;
I tried his breeks before the glass,
They fitted to a T.
O michty me, &c.

If I could change frae lass to lad
By pullin' on the breeks,
Ye'd see a bonnie sodger lad
In just a couple weeks.
O michty me, &c.

THE HISTORY OF HIM FROM THE BEGINNING

THIS is his hist'ry
From the beginnin'.

Awa' in the far-back,
The tar'ble lang time ago,
Bits o' thin nebula wander'd in ether
Seekin' divarsion.
Ether's a cowld thing.

One that I ken o' measur'd a billion
(Miles, understand me)
Takin' the size o' it under the oxters.
It was a wee one,
Still, it could travel miles by the million
On a day's journey.
(Millions o' miles are
Naethin' to nebulas.
Mention to one o' them
Yards, feet, and inches!
Faix, it will laugh at ye).

This one I tell o'
Once on its travels
Met a sun-system,
Plaisin' it mightily;
Bleezin' big fireball right in the centre,
Bizzin' and burnin'.
Red open countenance—
Big corporation,
Rowlin' quite aisily.

"Say," says the nebula to the big fireball,
"How did ye do it?
Troth, but ye're shapely,
Firm-like and solid;
No gas about ye!
How did ye manage?"
"How," says the fireball,
"Aisy as aisy,
Turn about quick enough,
Birlin's what does it,
Birl like the—pardon."

So the wee nebula started to birlin',
Birl'd till its coat tails flew off at tangents,
Bilin' and burstin',
Thick wi' volcanoes,
Just like your parritch.

After a lang time, one o' them, nameless,
Crusted and harden'd,
Got the outside o' it,
Not under water,
Cover'd wi' green stuff—
Trees, like, and cabbages.

Sartin small insecks
Lightin' upon it
Conceiv'd the ideas o'
Nat'ral selection,
Survival o' fittest,
And settra and settra;
Shapin' their organs
(Not, of coorse, musical;
I speak o' their livers,
Stomachs, and sich like),
Best way accordin' to where they were livin',
Coorse o' the ages,
Puttin' their minds to't,
Grew most prodigious,
Yards lang and yards lang,
Couldn't just call them beasts, birds, or fishes,
Hoppers, mudfloppers,
Lizardy, leathery.

Then they, or some o' them,
Took to the dry land,
Atin' the cabbages,
Thrivin' amazin'ly.
Names were most awful;
Even the ould fellow (savin' your presence)
Couldn't pronounce them;
Dinotheres, mastodons,
Tons o' rhinocero-potamic-elephants.
Goodness—the legs o' them!

Then in the pairt o' time people call process *
Came other craturs,
Bumptious and quare lookin',
New sort o' monkeys,

* In process of time.

Walkin' on two legs,
Wearin' skin breeches,
Thumpin' each other.

One was the father o'—
Whose son was father o'—
So on and so on
All thro' the ages,
All generations
Down to last cent'ry.

Then in the prisint times,
One day in summer,
Fine Sunday mornin'
Saw a new babby,
Quare like the rest o' them,
Rowl'd up in flannel.
'Wilder'd he was a bit,
Still he was lively,
Shoutin' a good deal.
Milk the ould women
Offer'd him kindly,
Hopin' to quiet him.
Took to it solemn,
Noddin' head wisely.
After a week or two,
Folk thought it needful,
'Cording to custom, dacent and proper,
Clargy should see him.

Maybe ye don't know what is a clargy,—
I will enlighten.
Clargy's a man that stands in a pulpit,
Thumps at a cushion,
Shouts at the people,
Takes up collections.

So to a clargy straightway they took him,
White in his finery,
White for his christenin',
That's what they call it.
"Give him a name, sor,"
Says all the people.
"What would ye like now?"
Clargy made answer.
"Patrick is dacent,"
Says the child's father.
"Pat let it be then,"
Says the ould clargy.
Then, for a year or so, he was the ruler,
Lordin' it lordly,
Bawlin' most bowldly.
Milk and sweet kisses,
That was his diet,
Changin' to, later,
Parritch and whackin's,
Lickin's and praties.

Sun risin', sun settin',
Winter and summer,
One after other, over and over,
Brought him in due time
What are entitled,
Not quite correctly,
Years o' discretion;
Didn't know properly, p'raps, how to use them,
Which may account for
His writin' o' blethers.

Now I would ax ye,
S'posin', just s'posin',
You had been wand'rin' round in the ether

In the ould ages,
And you had spied it,
That bit o' nebula,
Billiony, vapoury,
Would you have ever
Said it was possible;
Would you have thought it
In the laste likely
Pat could come out o' it,
Pat and these blethers?

XV

PSALMS

THERE is something gloriously invigorating in the air of a dark winter morning in the country. Not, be it understood, at the time when light is beginning to paint with grey the larger objects of the landscape, but in the earlier time of pure unadulterated darkness. What constitutes the charm of these hours it is difficult to explain. Certain it is, the feeling is quite different from that experienced in wanderings in the dark before rest at night. Then the day is over, the mind more or less fatigued; there are the thoughts of night, the time of sleep and rest, as for the greater part yet to come; the mind turns naturally to thoughts of decay—shortness of life—death. But in the darkness of morning it is different. The observer has slept, and has risen refreshed; his thoughts are of a day in which to live, and think, and work; he is about to see night—sister of death—vanquished. It is not yet the time for work, so that his hands are perforce idle; but the mind is active, and takes pleasurable impressions from ready-to-be-awakened nature. In the stillness that precedes the dawn the mountains seem to be awake and waiting for the sun. One can imagine them saying, "We shall see him first." And the man, conscious of the impending change from darkness to light, filled with ideas of the possibilities of a new day, and walking in stillness and mysterious darkness, which, somehow, is not that of night, finds himself filled with a happiness indescrib-

able in words, and more than is possible in the glare of day, with the spirit which "finds tongues in trees" and "books in running brooks."

My friend Pat feels to the full the charm of the hour before dawn, and frequently leaves his cottage in winter long before it is possible to work. First, a visit by lamplight is paid to the cattle, and then he goes away over the frost-hardened fields, returning for breakfast when the first shadows are cast by the rising sun. When I discovered to him my own love for morning hours of darkness, he invited me to breakfast at his cottage at half-past six next day. I started to pay my visit long before that time. The indigo sky above was lit by innumerable stars, which scintillated with the brightness peculiar to frosty weather; the sea was black as ink; and the eye, with that longing after light and the known, where much is dark and mysterious, dwelt with delight on the little bits of warmth, due to a lighthouse on the Scottish coast and the lights of a passing steamer.

After an hour's hard walking I stopped on a bridge over one of the numerous mountain streams. The water was high after recent rains, and its roar sounded thunderously in the gloom and stillness, influencing the thoughts in the undefinable, indescribable way that music stirs. A grey light had crept up the sky eastward, making a horizon visible in that direction. The thought came of the earth as a great black ball on which the spectator was standing, flying through the infinite ether; the horizon line was the visible edge of the great globe, and the roar of the waters the sound of its flight.

Leaning on the parapet of the bridge I looked over and down at a noisy burn. Growing in a crevice of the bridge wall was a little scale fern, its soft incurved and partially unrolled fronds showing clear in the now increasing light. It was easy to pass from thought of infinite space to thought of infinite duration, and to the mysterious and intimate con-

nection between the frail and passing and the vast and eternal. The life of that little plant had travelled far. Where was it when the basalt that now gives it shelter flowed liquid through the rifted limestone of old Antrim hills? Where was my own share of life then? Where was the strain of life of both when the Archaian foundations were being laid, "or ere the mountains were brought forth"? Back still farther—for the promise and potency of our lives must have been in the uncontracted nebula—Where and when in that nebula did the promise and potency of each part company, and by what evolutionary journey did we travel since, so that we meet now after inconceivable ages on this dark winter morning, the one as *Ceterach officinarum*, a fixture on a bridge over an Antrim stream, and the other as an organism of larger powers able to move and think, and to imagine where sight and knowledge fail?

When I lifted the latch of the cottage, the glowing warmth of the interior made me content to forego for a time the elusive, mysterious delights of morning darkness. The table was laid in the centre of the kitchen floor, and over the peat fire, on a great griddle, were nearly-cooked scones, baked by the good wife in honour of the visitor. A splendid collie lay winking at the firelight, and Pat, my host, in shirt sleeves, was sitting at what he calls his desk, a board made to rise and fall in front of a window looking eastward and seaward. Here he writes, finding thoughts and words to come easiest when he can see through the unshuttered window, as he sits, the light on the Scottish shore I had noticed on my way. He was busy now copying out one of his compositions, and writing being for him a troublesome occupation and associated with the idea of hard work, he had taken off his coat to it. The task finished, Pat put on his coat, and his wife summoned us to the table. But before a morsel was touched she took the "big Book," which was part of her marriage portion, and put a smaller Bible into

her husband's hand. Then they found Psalm xxix. and read it verse about, Mrs. M'Carty explaining that the practice of reading a psalm in this way before breakfast was an old custom in her father's house, which, with her husband's goodwill, had been transplanted when she became an Irish bride. "And where," said Pat as he put away the books, "will you find songs that stir you to the heart like these?" and he repeated reverently one of the verses he had just read: "The voice of the Lord is upon the waters; the God of glory thundereth; the Lord is upon many waters."

Then the meal proceeded. I have sat at the board in many countries and with all sorts and conditions of men, but no shared meal ever gave me greater pleasure than this one in the cottage of an Antrim glen.

A talk about the Psalms disclosed the fact, hitherto concealed, that Pat had translated a number of the Jewish songs into the words of the Antrim people. These were produced with diffidence. A fear that these homely attempts may be condemned on the one hand as rubbish, or, on the other, as an irreverent handling of Holy Scripture, has made him hesitate in giving them to the world. If arraigned under the second head, the verdict, I am sure, will be one of acquittal. There is nothing irreverent, and much that is reverent and appreciative, in this retention of the sentiment of the originals, while the language is changed into that "understanded" of the people. In only a few cases is the change possible. The Psalmist, whether priest, leader, king, or musician, introduces oftenest scenes and imagery foreign to the sight and thought of an Antrim peasant. Allusions to sacrifices, shields, bucklers, horns, and fierce and bloody enemies are ill at ease when clothed in the homely words that smell of peat reek. But the peasant who, as a child, saw the sunlit brow of Lurigethan, and, as an old man dropping into the grave, sees it changeless—he knows what are the everlasting hills. Winds such as shook the cedars of Lebanon make the

tall ash trees of an Antrim farm-steading moan and shriek; in Antrim are sheep, green pastures, and babbling brooks; the noise of great sea billows is heard on Antrim's shore. And when the Psalmist speaks of such things, the devout farmer can take the thoughts and reclothe them in the words of his own time and country with not loss but gain.

PSALM I

O HAPPY is the man that keeps
  The straicht and even way,
He heeds not tho' the wicked threeps
  At him the livelong day.
Wi' folks o' character that's loose
  He's no' fun' in the track,
Nor will he gang intil their hoose,
  Nor sit wi' them to crack.
It is to God's command he harks,
  He mak's it his delight,
And thinks aboot it while he warks,
  And while he rests at night.
He's like the tree—the bonnie tree—
  Doon by the burn that grows;
His fruit is guid and fair to see—
  Nae wither'd leaf he shows.
Guid luck in a' things he will find:
  That's no' the ill folks' case;
They're like the cauf* the winter wind
  Sends blowin' ow'r the place.
Their ways luk'd into winna stand
  That God and guidness hate,
And wi' the guid folk o' the land
  They sall not congregate.

* Chaff.

But God—'tis only He does ken
The way the righteous go;
The crooked way o' wicked men
Maun lead to endless woe.

PSALM VIII

O LORD, oor Lord, it's in Thy hame
They ken the glory o' Thy name,

Awa' beyond the heavens high,
Awa' aboon the spangled sky.

Wha, by the mooth o' sookin'-wean,
Mak's ill folk frae their ill refrain.

When I look upward to the height,
And see the glories o' the night,

And think Thy fingers made them a',
The moon, the stars, baith great and sma',

One thocht is aye beyond my ken—
Why should ye fash yersel' wi' men?

Ye've gi'en him near the angels' state,
And croon'd his heid wi' honour great,

A' leevin' things in sea or lan',
Ye've pit them underneath his han'—

The sheep and cattle o' the field,
The wild things muir and forest yield,

The wee bit bird that flaps his wings,
And soars up in the blue and sings,

The fish that kens his way to gang
The sea's deep hidden ways alang.

Lord o' us a'—Hoo great's Thy name,
Hoo high aboon the earth Thy fame.

PSALM XV

WHA is he, Lord, the man may try
To mak' his hame wi' Thee?
Or wha Thy haily mountain high
Can ever hope to see?
The man that brawly does his pairt
And tells the honest truth,
Wha hasna ae thing in his hairt,
Anither in his mooth;
Wha aye to what he says tak's heed,
And willna even name
The clash ill-manner'd folk hae spreed
That's to a neebour's shame.
Sma' favour find they in his een
That lie and cheat and steal,
But sic as tak' the Lord for frien',
He likes their company weel.
Frae what is richt he'll no' be stirr'd
By gain or loss o' gear,
And when he gi'es his promis'd word
He'll stick to that—nae fear.
O' interest nae mair he'll tak'
Than may to him belang,
And nae amount o' fee can mak'
Him do his neighbour wrang.

That is the man wha a' his days
Has luck that willna flee,
Wha gains richt endin' by richt ways
Shall never movit be.

PSALM XXIII

My Shepherd is the Lord, His hand
Shall a' my wants supply;
In mony a green and pleasant land
He mak's me doon to lie.
Alang the burn, the wimplin' burn,
That bubbles ow'r the stanes,
He leadeth me roon' mony a turn;
By richt ways me constrains.
Tho' in the fearsome vale of woe
I walk and see death near,
Thy rod and staff before me go,
And tak' awa' my fear.
A table weel laid oot for me
My ill-wishers see spreed;
My cup is brimmin' ow'r; by Thee
Anointed is my heid.
Gudeness and mercy a' my days
Shall surely follow me,
And ow'r my gratefu' heid always
God's holy roof shall be.

PSALM XXXII

O weel for him, the happy man
And blithesome is his lot,
Wha finds his sin a' blotted oot,
Forgiven and forgot.

O weel for him when in the buik
That hauds accoont o' sin,
The Lord has naethin' written doon
Against his name therein.
If I kept quate or made a noise,
'Twas a' the same to me,
My banes were sair, for nicht and day
I cudna restit be.
Because your hand was laid on me
I dried up in my prime,
As pleasant fields grow parch'd and bare
In droothy summer-time.
I tell't Ye then o' my distress—
Then to mysel', quo' I,
"I'll to the Lord my sins confess—
To hide them willna try."
Then straight awa' the answer came,
Wi pardon fu' and free,
The penalty for wrang o' mine
Was taken aff frae me.
And this is why—wi' danger nigh
And succour lang deferr'd,
When folk like me in anguish cry
They ken they will be heard.
And tho' the trouble rushes strang,
Like spate o' waters high,
Ye needna fear—yer feet will stan',
Yer heid will aye be dry.
Ye are my shelter, O my God,
Ye me frae vengeance hid,
And sangs o' joy are in my mooth
At thocht o' what Ye did.
Ye said to me, "I'll set ye straight
On road that ye maun gang,
I'll guide ye wi' a watchfu' ee
For fear ye should gae wrang.

But dinna be like horse or mule
That hae nae common sense,
And maun be held wi' branks and bit
Lest they should gi'e offence."
Ill-leevin' folk will feel the stroke
O' sin-correctin' rod,
But they are safe and free frae skaith
That trust a lovin' God.
O lilt awa' wi' gledsome voice,
Mak' roof and raifters ring,
Rejoice—again I say, rejoice,
And dae yer best to sing.
I tell ye, man, cry oot wi' joy,
Tho' folk may ca' ye mad;
If a' is richt 'tween you and God,
Ye canna be too glad.

PSALM XC

Lord, Thoo hast been a shelter'd hame
For a' the time we ken;
Aye, sin the time when first there came
To earth the first o' men.
And lang before the hills were born,
Or earth her shape was gi'en,
Frae lang syne to this present morn,
Thoo God alane hast been.
As poother Thoo dost grind us sma'
Beneath the heavy stane,
Thoo sayest to us men, "Awa',
Gae back to dust again."
And a' a thoosan' years' array
Coonts nae mair in Thy sight,
Than to oorsel's does yesterday,
Or hour we sleep at night.

Like clod on spate o' waters borne
  Nae mair its place to find
Are we, or like the dream at morn
  We canna ca' to mind,
Or, like the bit o' tender grass
  The mornin' sees sae blythe,
But wi' the eventime, alas,
  It's doon before the scythe.
Thy wrathfu' glance is ill to bear,
  Sair is Thy anger keen;
The sins we happit up wi' care
  Lie open to Thy een.
Hoo fast oor days like lightnin' flee
  When Thy dread anger's felt,
The lifetime's years but seem to be
  A wee bit tale that's tell't.
Three score and ten's aboot the time
  The maist o' us spend here,
Or if we're strang till past the prime
  We'll last the echty year.
But wrastlin' thro' at sic a length
  Mak's auld folk unco tir'd,
And stayin' langer than the strength
  Is no' to be desir'd.
Wha is't the wecht daur measure weel
  O' Thy correctin' rod?
E'en sae its stroke shall sinners feel,
  As they hae tempted God.
Gi'e help, O Lord, to change oor gait,
  That wise folk we may be;
Hoo lang may we expectin' wait
  Thy face in peace to see?
And fill us wi' Thy guidness sae
  That when the night is past
We may a gledsome mornin' hae
  Wi' gledness that shall last.

And for the weary years we bore
  Oor weel-deservit pain,
Gi'e us o' gledsome years a store
  As mony mair again.
And may Thy glory, like the sun,
  Shine frae the heights above,
And when oor day its coorse has run
  Still light the bairns we love.
And in oor daily wark we pray
  For blessin' on oor skeel,
The thing we pit oor hands to dae
  Help us to dae it weel.

XVI

SONNETS

THE farmyard is not the place in which to look for sonnets. Here are not many, and of the poor half-dozen the Guittonian purist may reject some because the octave and sestet, the major and minor wave of the type he loves are missing. Pat's method of composition, earlier explained, which starts with the conception of a swinging line which has the power of a magnet to attract others to each side until an idea's expression has attained respectable size and shape, will not do for sonnets. His rhymes or songs have birth by accident, and grow to maturity on the field or moor; a sonnet, "the sang that gi'es nae liberty to sing," requires the study and set purpose and rule and compasses.

Ann of the second is she of whom something has been written already in the introduction to the Abbey Tales. Nature, who rarely gives with both hands, gave her bulk and withheld charms, and so it came about that no man ever asked her if she had a heart, no male arm itched to girdle her extensive waist. Itched it never so persistently, no arm indeed would have been equal to the task, for Ann began to bulge under the armpits, and reached her greatest diameter on the plane where a waist should be, a diameter which, multiplied by three, was beyond the circumferential powers of even two arms. Ann's was the beauty of usefulness. When little pigs were coming into the world she sat up with them o' nights, and saw that each got his full share of the

good things of this life, and that mother's love and avoirdupois did not crush the young breath out of them. And their tails she anointed with sweet oil that they might keep them, for it is a way with little pigs to drop these curly adornments in their first days. And she wanted not for love of a kind, for the elders of the stye knew the times of her appearing, and when they heard her heavy footfall they lifted up their voices and rejoiced. What Ann did not know of calves and ducks and hens and turkeys and geese wasn't knowledge, although she could not have told what she knew without many and severe falls on the slippery places of grammar, and, if you carried her out of the field of her attainments, the ground of conversation was sure to be freely littered by the unconsidered trifles she dropped from the great bundle of her ignorance. Had you heard her, reader, you might have laughed, but look at your own bundle where you keep, more or less tidily concealed, the things that you do not know. Beside its vast dimensions does not the little parcel of your knowledge seem small? I am persuaded that among human beings the great bundle differs less in size than in the nature of its contents. If a sixth sense could make it apparent, Lord Kelvin and Ann Bradley might be found toiling under burdens of nearly similar dimensions. The great scientist, examining on Electrostatics, would find nothing in Ann's little bag of the known. She would not so much as have heard that there were any Fraunhofer's lines. But Ann, examining Lord Kelvin on *Diseases of the Hen* or *Caudal Extremities of Pigs, How to Retain them*, would probably find all belonging to these matters in his parcel of minus quantities, and might indeed pronounce him at the close of the inquiry "just the ignorantest man ye ever seen." It is curious that, while we all admit the smallness of our knowledge and the greatness of our ignorance, we are so ready to smile when a fellow-creature drops anything from the larger of his two bundles. That is, we chuckle if when we

see it we recognise it as something we carry in our little knowledge parcel.

Once I listened to a gentleman of no mean attainments while he addressed a large audience on a subject of which he was master. He opened to us his handbag, which contained much not found in the bags of the common people. We saw and admired. But, during the exhibition, by inadvertence, he dropped a fragment from his great burden. It was only a word, but it was enough to tell many that, tied up in the lecturer's large bundle, was the whole of the German language. Hence smiles, self-congratulations, &c. But a slip like this may well be excused; it is only when the exposed article is some pocket handkerchief of knowledge, which it is disgraceful not to have in the little parcel, that censure is due as to one untidy in his person, wandering about with vest unbuttoned, shoe-strings untied, and stockings down at heel. There is an untidiness which sometimes accompanies a well-crammed bag of attainments, and it is to be forgiven. But who shall pardon the man who is ignorant of his ignorance, who carries his burden with wrapper torn and string untied, littering the highway with the contents of the great fardel which, notwithstanding the wholesale deposits which mark his footsteps, knows no decrease. "The more he gave away, the more he had" might be written of such an one, and not in a complimentary sense. But this is wandering from the sonnets of the farmyard.

ON THE UNSATISFACTORINESS OF THE SONNET

THE Sonnet's but a thin and rusty blade,
A crutch no' able muckle weight to bear,
A cutty sark that naethin' could persuade
A self-respectin' sentiment to wear.
A dochter o' the muse a' skin and banes,
A well whence leetle to refresh can flow,
A poet's corner, yieldin' only stanes
Whaur blossom and the halesome yarb* should grow.
A cage that winna let a thocht tak' wing,
A tasteless mouthfu' withoot pith or sap,
A sang that gi'es nae leeberty to sing,
A field no' big enoo' to raise a crap,—
Too sma' to gi'e auld Pegasus a fling
The baste's just started when he has to stap.

IN PRAISE OF (A PART OF) ANN BRADLEY

DEAR Ann, thro' mists o' memory thy face
Looms like the sun thro' fog o' frosty morn;
In sonnet's compass wha can fitly trace
The features rare that did thy face—adorn!
But that great globe—thy corpus—I wad sing,
Weel patch'd wi' continents o' various hue,
Thy great equator compass'd wi' a string
That held up apron—like an ocean—blue,
An ocean jaup'd wi' islands sma' and big
Frae swingin' satellite each airm suspends,
The buckets twa, wi' saft delights for pig;
Thy foot was musical to gruntin' friends,
Tho' Nature niver shap'd it for a jig.
I wad say mair, but here the sonnet ends.

* Herb.

LIGHT AFTER DARKNESS

I STOOD on Trostan as the sun went doon,
I watch'd the misty darkness onward creep;
It put the tiréd valleys first to sleep,
Then climb'd amang the hills and wrapp'd them roon'.
Clouds came and blotted out the stars aboon,
A' in the earth or sky had disappear'd,
I was there only and the darkness weird,
And yet I knew that dawn should come, and soon.

So shall it be, I said, in my life's night;
First shall the far-off things dissolve in gloom,
Then hold o' nearer slip frae fingers numb.
It may be for a while that heaven's light
May fail me at the entry o' the tomb,
Yet to my eyes I know the light will come.

ATTAINMENT

I SET mysel' to climb a distant hill,
The glory o' the height I sought to gain,
Made nearly pleasure o' the rough road's pain,
And wayside pleasantness made sweeter still.
So was I glad tho' road was fair or ill,
Whether the sky was black for hail or rain,
Or sunlight flooded all frae peak to plain,
Whether a zephyr blew or east wind chill.

I reach'd my mountain top. I stood alone,
The glow had faded into cauld grey light,
And lengthen'd shadows mark'd a far spent day;
Then learn'd I standing by that wind-swept stone,
Angels may joy on full attainment's height,
The man joys only on the upward way.

SECOND YOUTH

Sweet youth, when years were lang and life a road
That endless stretch'd before us, sunlit still;
When castle-topp'd was ev'ry distant hill,
And never storm-cloud in the blue drift show'd;
When wi' prophetic sight by Hope bestow'd
We saw the places high that we should fill,
And flow'rs that never knew an autumn chill
Bloom'd by these distant places o' abode.

O sweeter second youth o' shorter years
That sees behind us scene o' storm and strife,
The fallen castle and the shrunk estate,
The trodden roadway wetted wi' our tears,
And sees us no' the agéd endin' life,
But schooléd children comin' to its gate.

WHA KENS?

Fear not endeavour high tho' birth be low,
Great brain is no' in fee to great estate;
The steps o' puir men's ancestors do go
As far as theirs whose children are the great.
The infant in the breath o' life's first morn
Holds heritages ancient, blest or curst.
Life kens nae deathbed—the man last born
Is tied by threads mysterious to the first.

Wha kens how much he has frae them that rest
In lang line stretchin' to the warld's first grave?
How much frae God direct is his acquest,
How much frae time and land that birthright gave!
Dead's gifts, the Lord's, land's, time's, and living men's
These great, what may not be attain'd!—wha kens?

XVII

LOVE

THEY are here, in the matter of wiving, disciples of Shakspeare rather than of Crabbe, for they marry early, and the husband, as a rule, is older than the wife.

> "Let still the woman take
> An elder than herself; so wears she to him,
> So sways she level in her husband's heart." *

Thus said Shakspeare. Crabbe favoured an old wife.

> "Young let the lover be, the lady old,
> And that disparity of years shall prove
> No bane of peace although some bar to love.
> 'Tis not the worst our nuptial ties among
> That joins the ancient bride and bridegroom young,
> Young wives like changing winds their pow'r display
> By shifting points and varying day by day.
> . . . . . .
> But like a trade wind is the ancient dame,
> Mild to your wish and every day the same,
> Steady as time, no sudden squalls you fear,
> But set full sail and with assurance steer.
> Till every danger in your way be pass'd,
> And then she gently, mildly, breathes her last,
> Rich you arrive in port, awhile remain,
> And in a second venture sail again." †

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* "Twelfth Night," Act ii. sc. 4.
† "The Parish Register."

Courtship with us is not demonstrative, but not all of it is so tame as was that of Mr. M'Ilhagga. Place and our climate have something to answer for. It is not pretended that this northern land that we love is the most fertile of the world. Unkind might be written of much of its soil, and from the profit it gives flood, wind, frost, and disease exact a large discount. The accidents of our calling and position tend to produce men of two entirely dissimilar types, and neither is romantic in love-making. In the one the uncertainty as to results of labour breeds a painful anxiety to avert losses and an economy in expenditure which may develop into miserliness. The man of this type rises early and works late, eats the bread of sorrow every day, and, when he comes to marry, his choice of a wife is decided by considerations of "her p'ints for wark" and the amount of her fortune. This kind dies with money in the bank. The man of the second type, equally impressed by the uncertainties of harvesting, becomes less and less anxious and careful—coming in the end to believe that results are matters less of labour than of luck. He sees a good crop in a year when no special pains are taken, and a poor or lost one when care has been great. Where, then, prosperity is good luck and adversity bad luck, things which cannot be gained or avoided by taking thought, marriage will also be a thing of luck. To this man the good wife or the bad cometh not by observation, and so he mates like the fowls of the air, with no thought for the morrow. This kind is doomed to everlasting poverty.

But, God be thanked, there are exceptions. There are who have sense enough in their early days to know that the place for the visible part of them in this world must be fought for and won by their own strong hands. But while they labour for a house of stone and lime to shelter their bodies, they build castles in the air for their second quantities, their imaginative selves. To possess a structure of this kind it is not needful that one should come of long ennobled race, and

for enlargement, rebuilding, or renovation, it is not necessary to have heavy bank balances or a long rent-roll. The rhymer was always a castle builder. No one can lay it to his charge that he has not laboured with hand and brain to provide things honest in the sight of all men, and no one but himself knows what solace in fatigue, trouble or anxiety he has found in retirement to one of his air-built castles. They are gorgeous and picturesque as any that rose in the romantic past their owner loves so well. Always in them from the first was to be found a gracious womanly presence, the composite mental picture of all good and beautiful women of whom the builder had heard or read. When the lord of these stately mansions came to see in the flesh the one woman who satisfied eye and mind, he transferred to her the homage that had been paid to the noble lady of imagination, and this sweet damozel suddenly took on the features of the beloved whose habitation was the solid earth. And here may be given a little story belonging to this time, perfectly true as here narrated, and certainly curious. Pat was in love, but, for the time, it was uncertain that the girl he desired should become his wife. She was much in his thoughts. One dark night in late summer he was asked to accompany a friend and his two young daughters in a long walk over the hills. The girls had an errand to a dressmaker. Arrived at the house, a low thatched one by the roadside, the men stayed outside while the young people attended to their business. From the house came an old woman, mother of the dressmaker, who, addressing the elder man, said, "Who is that young fellow with you?" "Young fellow?" was the reply, "he is nearly as old as I am." "No, he is not," said the old woman, "and he is not married, but he will get the wife that he wants—she is waiting for him." Pat's companions knew nothing about the matter that occupied his thoughts, nor did any one in the neighbourhood, for the beloved was not in Ireland—he had never been to this

place—it was so dark that the old woman could not see his face nor could he see hers, and nothing in conversation led up to her statement and prophecy.

THE WIFE HE WANTS

I HAE a wee thocht in my heid,
A wee thocht, naethin' mair,
That 'gin I saw a lass I lik'd,
I micht think weel to pair.
I want nae wife to spoil my life,
Hoo rich soe'er she be,
Sae what I like and what dislike
It's juist as weel to see.

I want nae lang-legg'd hizzy here
My wee bit hoose to share.
Wha wants twa yairds or mair o' wife?
It isn't me, I'll swear.
She micht forget to duck her heid,
The ceilin's rather low;
I winna hae the plaster crack'd
A' candidates should know.

I winna mairry by the ton,
And, therefore, want to say,
I'll hae nae big fat sowdy lass
Trapesin' roon' this way.
The furniture's a wee bit auld,
I'm no' sure o' the stairs.
A wechty woman's gye severe,
Especially on chairs.

But tho' I dinna want her fat
She maunna be too lean;
There's little comfort wi' a wife
That, sideways, can't be seen.
I want nae hippopotamus,
But still she must be roon',
Banes rattlin' when she mov'd aboot
Wad hae an eerie soon'.

She maunna hae big feet the lass
That wants wi' me to wed,
I'll hae nae beetlin'-engines here
To fill my life wi' dread.
Besides I hae improv'd the roads
Aboot this bit o' fairm,
And muckle poondin' o' them noo'
Wad do a dale o' hairm.

For reasons I will here expleen
I canna hae rid hair—
My hairt is no' my strangest pairt
The doctors a' declare.
If I cam' hame too sudden like
And saw my wife's rid heid,
I might suspeck the hoose afire
And faint awa' clane deid.

That I command, that she obeys,
The lassie maun concede.
I haud wi' Paul in this remark,
"The husband is the heid."
It's ae thing that I winna stan',
A want o' due respeck;
To ony lass that wants to rule
I sartinly objeck.

And yet I'm no' the man to fuss
For pure objecktin's sake,
I ken that in this mortal life
We hae to give and take.
And 'gin the lassie's wise and guid
And dacent as to rank,
I'll no' objeck that she should hae
A pickle in the bank.

THE LOVERLESS LASS

The laddies like bonnie brown hair they say—
Naebody looks at mine;
It's glossy and thick as the leaves in May,
It's silky, and lang, and fine.
Nae lassie I ken o' has better or mair—
It's a' that a heid should be;
But naebody wants to look at my hair,
Naebody wants to see.

Whenever I tak' a keek in the glass,
I know what it tells to me:
There's no' in the pairish anither wee lass
Has got sic a bright blue ee.
The laddies like een that are blue I ween,
Blue as the sky can be;
But naebody wants a peep at my een,
Naebody wants to see.

My colour is neither too red or too white,
It's just the right shade between;
I know the complexion is perfitly right,
To gang wi' a pair o' blue een.

My cheeks they are roon' and saft as the doon,
They're ruddy and fair to see;
But naebody seekin' a cheek comes roon',
Naebody comes to me.

Vanity's no' a guid thing in a lass—
Vanity's no' in me;
Still I can see when I look in the glass
A bonny wee mou' to pree.*
It's sma' and saucy and rosy and fu'
As ony that I can see;
But naebody wants to pree my mou',
Naebody wants to pree.

Laddies like measurin' waists they say—
Measurin' wi' their airm;
And mine I'd like to see measur'd that way—
I dinna see where's the hairm;
But tho' I hae bought a weel-fittin' goon,
And a tidy wee waist hae I,
There's naebody wants to measure me roon',
Naebody wants to try.

Why for a laddie should I hae to wait?
Why for a lover pine?
No' mony a leddy that drives in state
Has ankle or foot like mine;
They're perfitly shap'd, and sma' and neat,
I've kilted my coats a wee;
But naebody wants to look at my feet,
Naebody wants to see.

* Mouth to kiss.

TO PEGGY

Peg, my dear, my heart's delight,
No' a wink o' sleep by night
Can I get for you, my love,
Can I get for you.

A' that's sweet in earth or air,
A' that's pleasant everywhere,
Make me think o' you, my love,
Make me think o' you.

When the sunbeam in the glade
Plays at hide and seek wi' shade,
It's your smile I see, my love,
It's your smile I see.

In the burn's sweet murmur clear,
Sure it's Peggy's voice I hear,
Your sweet voice so low, my love,
Your sweet voice so low.

In the deep blue sky above
'Tis your eyes I see, my love,
Your sweet eyes sae blue, my love,
Your sweet eyes sae blue.

Peggy, lass, for mercy's sake,
On your sweetheart pity take,
Take me, Peggy—do, my love,
Take me, Peggy—do.

LOVE AT FIRST SIGHT

I WALKIT in a forest glade,
And chanc'd to meet a winsome maid;
I look'd, I lov'd, I took her hand,
She gi'ed against it nae command;
My courage risin' mair an' mair,
I kiss'd the lassie then and there.
What did she do? Scream oot and froon?
Na! what she did was say "Sit doon,"
Then plump'd hersel' upon my knee
And gave me lovin' kisses three.
Noo, haud a minute ere ye cry,
"Oot on sic lack o' modesty,"
And ca' her forward jade and bauld—
The puir wee maid is sax years auld.

THE PLOUGHBOY'S SWEETHEART'S SONG

O I LOVE to hear the whistle o' my sweetheart in the morn,
I love to hear his whistle in the meadow by the sea,
For I know that while he labours to mak' ready for the corn,
His heart is fu' o' gladness at the thocht o' love o' me.

O I love to hear his whistle wi' the harness-clank at eve,
As hameward come the horses frae the meadow by the sea,
For I know the kind o' fancies that my ploughboy's mind will weave,
And the melody he whistles is a song o' love o' me.

O I love to hear his whistle when the night is growin' dark,
And drearie blaws the wind across a black and angry sea,
For I think then o' an ocean on which some day we'll embark,
And never storm that on it blaws shall part my love and me.

THE COORTIN' O' JEEMS M'ILHAGGA

He wasn't bad lookin', o' means he had some,
A guid steady man, warkin' early and late,
And noo, by the favour o' Providence, come
To years o' discretion—weel, say forty-eight—
The thought had come to him that maybe a wife
Might add to the comfort and pleasure o' life,
He thought, too, wi' raison I think, that the hand
That held twa lang leases o' guid ploo-land
Was no' in the market just every day.
He thought, as I say, that way.

For merriage the farmin's a deefficult trade,
It's no' if she's tall, if she's light, if she's dark,
The man has to think o' in choosin' his maid;
He has to conseedir her p'ints for wark.
The wedded to farmer will verra soon feel
She has wedded the kye and the byre as weel,
And whaur there are acres o' guid ploo-land,
In less than a fortnight she'll weel understand
She, wi' the man bodie, has merried same day
His praties and corn and hay.

Wi' halesome regard to the needs o' the case,
Jeems settled his mind on a lassie ca'd Meg;
A lassie no' muckle defeecient in grace,
The dochter o' ould Jamie Broon o' Dunbeg.
Her age might be thirty, he likit her hair,
Her temper (as far as he kenn'd it) was fair;
Her step it was firm and weel roonded her arm,
Nae brithers had she to inherit the farm,
And then the bit penny that in the bank lay
Was sure to be hers, some day.

Noo maybe ye'll think when the sweetheart was found
That Jeems wad be coortin' her every day,
And buyin' her peppermint draps by the pound,
And sayin' the saftest sweet things he could say,
And writin' lang letters extollin' her charms,
And tryin' to measure her waist wi' his arms,
And praisin' her eyebroo and kissin' her hand.
Na! sixty-wan acres o' guid ploo-land
Get on wi' nae blethers like that—not they.
They coort quite anither way.

Once every week he wad tallow his shoon,
Wad put on the coat that o' Sundays he wore,
And find his way ow'r to see Mister Broon
And talk aboot maitters o' farmin' galore.
His feet, straight afront o' his chair, he'd contrive
To fix at an angle o' forty-and-five.
And while the bit lassie, to north o' the fire,
Sat flashin' her needles and knittin' sae fast,
Oor frien' was addressin' his chat to her sire;
His face releegiously turn'd sou'-wast.
O never a word to the lass did he say—
He lookit the ither way.

'Twas maistly o' Fridays the veesit was paid,
He cam' aboot seven and waited till nine;
But after the first "How d'ye do?" to the maid,
'Twas aye to the feyther his speech did incline.
He kept up the custom a guid twa year
Wi' weekly discoorses on farmin' and gear,
And systems and praties and leases and hire,
And horses and butter, and drainage and hay,
Wi' Maggie aye knittin' to north o' the fire,
And never a saft lovin' word went her way.
Nae sweetheartin' word did he say.

The twa year complete, next Friday that came
He wesh'd his face weel wi' a bit scented sape,
And spent half-an-'oor at the gless wi' the aim
O' gettin' his touzled rid hair into shape.
Then a' in his best his guidsel' he arrays,
No' just the coat only like ordinar' weeks,
But likewise the braw Sunday weskit and breeks.
In fack, wi' the hale o' his very best claes,
His boots, no' wi' tallow, but black frae the shap,
He polish'd until he had made them to shine;
Then oot frae the cupboard he took a wee drap,
The sma'est wee drap o' the ould port wine.
He fix'd in his buttonhole, wi' a bit string,
Twa lilac primroses—the saison was Spring—
Then made in the usual direction a start,
And whustled a bit to keep up his heart.
He didn't feel aisy altho' he look'd gay,
Felt queer, just a bit, that day.

I s'pose ye'll be thinkin' ye're gaun to hear noo
O' kissin' and huggin' and wark o' that kind.
Git oot wi' your nonsense—I want ye to mind
This wee bit o' story I'm tellin' is true.
Proposals o' merriage ye must understand
Are serious in cases o' guid ploo-land,
Nae maitter what folk that tell stories may say,
They're no' to be made that way.
It's mortial pertickler is guid ploo-land,
It has to be carefu' in givin' its hand.
It doesn't do coortin' by commonplace rules,
Love letters, hand squeezes, a couple o' fools.
It does what it does in a 'sponsible way,
A ser'ous, responsible way.

He arrivit at seven, like ordinar' days,
His greetin' was just o' the ordinar' kind.
But, barrin' the weel-obsarv'd fact o' his claes,
Was naethin' to show he had aught on his mind.
His feet were, as usual, in front o' his chair,
Weel plac'd at the angle o' forty-and-five.
His talk to the feyther was a' o' the fair
And prices o' cattle baith deid and alive.
He kept to that subjeck the veesit entire,
His face in the usual direction—sou'-wast
(The lassie aye knittin' to north o' the fire),
And never a word for the girl till the last,
And no' till the door clos'd behind him to boot
Did he put his heid back wi' the words, "May I beg
That ye'll come to the door for a meenute, Miss Meg."
And Maggie got up frae the fire and went oot.

They settled the maitter in twa words then,
He ax'd her the question in one word, "Weel?"
She answer'd him straight wi' anither word, "When?"
(A word frae guid ploo-land, it means a great deal.)
They're married a year and a quarter the day,
The bairn's an oncommon fine laddie, they say.
Tremendous fine babby, they say.

XVIII

LIFE—THE EARTH-THRILL

On the north side of the wide, open space in front of the rhymer's cottage is a high bank against which, for generations, it has been the custom to stack the winter's supply of peat fuel. Generally there are, by the end of summer, two long stacks of turf, one of which, for half its height, leans against the steep, browned slope. Growing on the top of this, and close to the end of the stacks, is an old ash-tree, gnarled, bossed, twisted, and knotted in a remarkable manner, with one principal arm pointing in the direction to which the trunk leans, south-west.

Little children for many generations have played at the tree foot in the clean, sweet-smelling peat culm or turf dust, and one of these, the rhymer himself, says that, for him, the contorted old tree-trunk counted almost as one of the players; its knots, bumps, and excrescences were for him the features of a face full of intelligence, and the bend of its trunk and the outward stretching of the great arm had, to childhood's imagination, a look of conscious desire to share in the joyous playmaking that went on below.

When Pat came to be older, and absent at times from the old farmhouse, he found that while the thought of home produced an instantaneous mental picture of his parents and of the fire on the stone floor of the great kitchen, the form of the old ash-tree crowded in immediately behind this first conception like a dog claiming share of a caress it has seen

given to another. Now that he is man-grown the same tree, apparently unchanged, continues to exercise a strange, attractive power. At home and in a musing spirit the man's steps tend unconsciously to reach the tree; sitting by the fireside in the evening he has felt impelled to go out and look at the scarred old trunk, and the look has always brought with it a strong feeling of pleasure and satisfaction. When he has tried to analyse this feeling he has felt that although association of childhood's happy hours spent at the tree root must be one element, and while suggestion of intelligence due to face-like features and the contour of the leaning body and projecting arm may be another, there is a something more remaining which appears to reach him in part through the senses of sight and scent and hearing, but which seems to be apprehended in a far greater degree by some nameless, undeveloped sense of which he vaguely feels himself to be the possessor, while what the manner and sphere of that sense's action may be he cannot imagine.

Pat himself is inclined to account for this insistence of the old ash-tree for right to a place in his thoughts, by that theory of transmitted experience mentioned in the introduction to the "Abbey Tales." A critical moment in the life of an ancestor, he imagines, has been associated with a knotted and gnarled ash-tree. The man has found refuge in its branches from an enemy or from pressing danger in the chase. Or, carried away by a torrent and in danger of drowning, he has saved himself by clutching at and climbing into such a tree leaning over the river with probably one long principal arm stretched far over the water. On the retina of the saved man's consciousness, he thinks, the picture of that tree would so imprint itself that not only he, but his descendants through countless generations would be thrilled by the sight of any tree that nearly reproduced the picture of that which gave salvation.

But Pat is conscious also of a delight which he cannot

express by words in face of many an object in the landscape, and in face of the landscape as a whole; and as he grows older this delight becomes more and more for him the joy of life. From the cottage door can be seen a green-capped headland worn by the storm and sea-buffetings of ages. On days when the wind comes from the north-east, the breaking waves at its base rise full twenty feet in a cloud of white spray that can be seen for miles. Pat can hear, in imagination, the hiss of the falling water, and, watching and listening, he finds himself in a seventh heaven of delight incommunicable—wandering in mind over seas of space and time; hearing by inner ears songs that have no words, and seeing by inner eyes strange glories that cannot be painted.

Alike in degree of intensity, but differing in character are the emotions excited by other views. There is a field which the rhymer has often ploughed; its furrows run east and west. On the east or side next the sea the dip is sharp; on the side next the hills the slope is long and gradual. On the western side the sea is hidden by the rising ground until the slowly moving team reaches the crest of the ridge, when a superb view of rock and sea and distant Scottish coast bursts on the eye of the ploughman. He has seen that view a thousand times, and a thousand times he has stopped the horses to see a something behind the shapes of earth and sea and sky, and to feel the thrill of this picture's magic influences.

Differing again in character are the delights that come with a look at a bit of old road near the churchyard of Layde. The new road has been carried inland along one side of the glen, crossing at a narrow part and returning seawards by the other; but the old takes no account of heart or lung of horse or man, and goes up hill and down dale, dipping to the bottom of the gorge and rising on the opposite slope with no seeking after an easier way. It is now, at times, nearly impassable, and by many at any time would be called

unbeautiful, but by Pat, especially in the time of the whin-bloom, it is one of the most beautiful spots in his country, and a place to evoke in a remarkable manner entrancing, indescribable emotions such as have been mentioned.

This pleasant thrill could hardly be called the joy or a joy of life if the power to evoke it were possessed only by the tree, the headland, the sea, and the old whinny hill-road at Layde. It comes more or less with sight of, or proximity to, nearly everything that goes to make up the landscape; and probably the strong attractive power of the twisted ash-tree is but this same inexplicable thrill with an added note from the associations of a happy childhood.

It is the touch of what we call the lower creation on the soul of man, and no one yet has found a way of telling to another what that touch means to him. Turner tried colour and added, or tried to add, what he felt to the obvious in the landscapes he painted. Ruskin, feeling this touch as clearly perhaps as any in our times have felt it, has tried to show what it is in words of colour. It is no peculiar joy of the pure-minded and high-souled, for the animal was strong enough in Turner to make him relish a drunken orgie in Wapping hells, and Rousseau, as despicable a soul as ever wore human flesh, felt it to the full. And he felt, too, the difficulty of describing it. In the fifth of his "Reveries," "the most perfect of all his compositions," * and delightful reading even for such as despise the writer of the "Confessions," he paints an impressionist picture of what he saw. He cannot tell what there is to tell—the words are not that can reach another consciousness and reproduce in it what he saw or felt. All he could do, all any can do, is to deal with words as the impressionist deals with blotches of colour carrying an added value of projection, in the hope that some one will bring to his picture a power to receive akin to that which has been used to transmit. He is speaking

* Morley, "Rousseau," vol. ii.

of his life on the little isle of St. Peter in the lake of Bienne. Here is a string of extracted phrases and sentences: "Stretched at full length in the boat's bottom, with my eyes turned up to the sky, I let myself float slowly hither and thither as the water listed, sometimes for hours together, plunged in a thousand confused delicious musings, which, though they had no fixed nor constant object, were not the less on that account dearer to me than all that I had found sweetest in what they call the pleasures of life. . . . I used to come down from the high ground, and sit on the beach at the water's brink in some hidden, sheltering place. There the murmur of the waves and their agitation charmed all my senses, and drove every other movement away from my soul; they plunged it into delicious dreamings . . . held me with such fascination that even when called at the hour . . . I could not tear myself away without summoning all my force. . . . He who finds himself (in a state he describes) may talk of bliss, not with a poor, relative, and imperfect happiness, such as people find in the pleasures of life, but with a happiness full, perfect, and sufficing that leaves in the soul no conscious, unfilled void. Such a state was many a day mine in my solitary musings in the isle of St. Peter, either lying in my boat as it floated in the water . . . or in other places than the little isle on the brink of some broad stream, or a rivulet murmuring over a gravel bed. . . . What is it that one enjoys in a situation like this? . . . these gentle ecstasies, these recompenses cannot be felt by all souls . . . the charm or our musing . . . a long and most sweet musing fit . . . surrounded by verdure and flowers and birds, and letting my eyes wander far over romantic shores that fringed a wide expanse of water bright as crystal, I fitted all these attractive objects into my dreams, and when at last I slowly recovered myself, and recognised what was about me, I could not mark the point that cut off dream from reality."

Pat, attempting to make known to another what this joy

of life is to him, might use the words "charm," "happiness," "bliss," while he would reject "musings" and "dreams." Nevertheless, it is certain that this not-to-be-described joy of his is the same as was Rousseau's, the joy that comes into the mind with the picture in the eye of soft, green, billowy foliage, or the lace-work of bare tree-branches against a winter sky, of field and flower and rock and sea, of curling smoke and distant hill, drifting cloud and singing water.

Old Parson Gilpin, the vicar of Boldre, in the New Forest, writing of his own land about the end of the eighteenth century, punctuates his description of scenery with sentences which show how deeply he felt the hopelessness of conveying his impressions by words. He speaks of "nameless beauties, which highly please but cannot be described." Before a very large picture he thinks we might "in some degree feel those sublime ideas which nature itself excites."

A writer of to-day, whose love of nature shines in every line he writes, finds the same difficulty when he tries to make others understand what is this special delight. In one of his books,* full of most delightful word-pictures of bird and beast and wood and field and hill, he speaks of "that visible nature that inspires in us feelings compared with which the highest pleasure the best and most perfect works of art can give is but a poor insipid thing, and as dreams compared to realities." Old writers used the word "amusing" to indicate the effect produced on their minds by landscape. Gilpin makes use of the word, and so does Gilbert White.

What is the secret of this charm? Personification, no doubt, accounts for it in a small measure. Hills, rocks, trees may show in outline an approach to the contour of the human face, and with the contour goes expression. If the

* "Nature in Downland," W. Hudson. Longmans, Green & Co., 1900.

look is a kind one, we are glad as we would be with the face of a fellow-being, kind to us, turned to us. If the attitude suggests rest, we feel the charm. If there is a scowl on the face of our hill, or cliff, or wood, we are still pleased, for in face of anger the feeling that we are safe from its effects is a pleasing one.

Appreciation of form and colour may explain our interest and pleasure to a certain degree, but behind all that we can account for under this head there is still an unexplainable something that attracts, that speaks, that sends the mind on journeys into parts unknown; there are dim perceptions that we and the scene are closely related, how we know not; an elusive, puzzling "something" remains which we can no more "tell" to another than we can *tell* a symphony to one who has not heard it. What is this mysterious "something more"?

When we come to think of it, is not our pleasure from music just as strange and inexplicable? Why should air vibrations, be they 30 or 30,000 to the second, tickling by hair-like processes the ends of nerves, make us feel grave or gay or calm or warlike? Why should they make us dream dreams? The answer, if we find it, may be, probably, the answer to that other question asked above, and a large part of that answer must be association, not in the restricted sense of a coupling of sounds with sights or states within the limits of an individual's lifetime, but the coupling of sound and sight or state over the whole history of man and his progenitors from the beginning of things.

Helmholtz assumes that the earliest musical instruments aimed at reproduction of the tones of the human voice. For early ages and for long ages a musical tone was a voice that spoke war, love, joy, grief. If it had been the fate of man, who spoke and sang, to lose his vocal organs, and become silent at a later stage of development, while he retained sense of hearing, the sounds of instruments reproducing the tones of speaking and singing ancestors to us silent folk

would make us feel the emotions pertaining to war, love, joy, grief. The emotions produced sounds, the sounds would reproduce the emotions. But we have retained voice; pitch varies with emotion to-day as it did ten thousand years ago, and to the inherited sensations that come to us from all along the line that stretches between us and the first man we add the associations of our lives.

That we know for ourselves to-day what are the tones appropriate to expression of anger, love, or other emotion, accounts for our interest or excitement on hearing these tones; but the perfectly unconscious giving of the true value or meaning to the sounds of modern complex music must be due to associations over an immense period. Brain and ear must have been "fed" and developed on association of sound and mental state to be capable as they are of reproducing in us instantaneously and unerringly the emotion proper to each sound.

If we hold, with another writer,* that musical instruments were invented in the order of (1) Instruments of percussion, (2) Wind instruments, (3) String instruments, the accounting for our excitation after hearing sounds produced by these instruments will not be any more difficult. The connection between blows falling on the body of an enemy and drum-beats is obvious; it is almost certain that the latter have been suggested by the former. The beating of a stretched skin, then, came to be instigatory of war, the drum-beat excited to blows; in like manner the clanging cymbal took its suggestions from the clash and clang of arms. Now, with the dints of war-associated music of a thousand generations on us, we need not to be told that the spirit of fighting is in sound of the drum and cymbal. Three beats on a drum will make the most of us straighten our backs for marching.

With the wind instruments came other war voices. The

* Rowbotham.

leader's summoning cry and the warrior's triumphal shout found larger voice in horn and trumpet. Likening his onset in battle to the rush of the strong wind, man imitated with his newer instruments the sound of the tempest and the moans and cries of his vanquished. With softer airs, on later stringed instruments he sang the songs of love. Probably nearly all the delight that comes to us in music by the road of association has relation to the two things which were all life to our progenitors, love and war. We are heirs of all that past ages knew of association of sound with act or mood, and cannot get rid of our inheritance; we hear yet the tones sounded in the days of our fathers and in the old time before them, the clash and clang of fights of early ages, old cries of wounded men, victors' shouts and lovers' pleas and sighs, and, mayhap, by the path of music come to us yet the whistle of wind and rustle of trees from a time when we were not men at all. We know what some tones mean to-day, we can feel the joy or terror attached to other tones, although the reason for the joy or terror has been lost long ago. If a peculiar sound long familiar to the ear of early man, and associated with the painful and terrible, were intermitted for thousands of years, and revived in our time without ill accompaniment, the thrill of the old terror would move us even now; the sound would be to us an eerie and awe-inspiring one.

Two objections can be made to a theory which refers the chief delight of music to association and to associations mainly concerned with the loves and wars of early and prehistoric times. The skill of modern composers and the number and perfection of the instruments at their disposal have resulted in the production of musical works of great complexity which, admittedly, give us pleasure, and it may be said that the ear cannot possibly analyse the sounds so as to transmit to the brain the associated idea belonging to each constituent tone.

But the ear *does* analyse and conveys the separate and distinct sensations, or, if not, it assesses the value of the mixture of tones, and the hearer of music, however complex it may be, receives an impression which is the equivalent of the emotions which, by association, attach to the various forces qualities or pitches of tone he hears together. Sounds associated with conflict or victory or defeat or welcome or parting or love or life abounding or joy or pain; sounds that reproduce the voices of nature in wind and wave: let these be heard in never so complex mixture, the whole has the value of the constituent parts, and the listener feels pleasure of the character that belongs to an addition of parts. Let the sweet scents of a hundred different flowers be mixed, and by our sense of smell we know a pleasing perfume, while it may be impossible for us to divide the result and apportion to each contributing flower its share of the pleasure. Nevertheless, the enjoyment of the mixed perfume is exactly the enjoyment of the separate parts.

The second objection is that these old associations have as much to do with sorrow as with joy. There can be no victor without vanquished; nature's unkindnesses are and were as well known as her good deeds; if we inherit countless associations of sound with joys, do we not also inherit like countless associations with pains and sorrows? Why then are not musical compositions productive of as much pain as pleasure? There is a reason, to be stated later, which explains why associations with pain may not perpetuate themselves so forcibly as those of joy; meantime another answer can be given. We do not object to sorrows which do not touch us (is it not stated that we get a great deal of pleasure out of the misfortunes of our friends?); we take pleasure in a musically induced melancholy from which we can free ourselves at will; the echoes of old despairing cries only heighten by contrast our joy and satisfaction in being free from the ills that evoked the sorrowful cries, as one

in safe shelter and snugly wrapped in warm blankets finds his sense of comfort increased by the howl of a tempest and roar of waters outside. Briefly, for here is not place to elaborate a theory of the Joy of Music, the ear of man never dies, and association passes with the generations—association that explains in large part our interest and pleasure in musical sounds or any combination of them. What pleasure remains unexplained is likely to be due to a correspondence between the movements of vital processes affecting us and the orderly succession of tone-producing vibrations.

Does this digression help us to the finding of the "something more" of our delight in landscape or its parts? I think it does. The writer of "Nature in Downland" points out that the thrill comes nearly altogether from the contemplation of land or things on land. Sight of sea or cloud does not affect us in the same degree, because in our own experience, or in that of our race, we have had comparatively little to do with them. "The sea and the sky in their ordinary aspects do not hold the attention, because we are not of them and do not feel them, and the association of moving in or on them is consequently not here associated with seeing." Of the joy that comes with position on a height he says, "I should look on it as a survival, like our fighting, hunting, and various other instincts—an inherited memory of a period when the hill-top was at the same time refuge, fortress, and tower of observation from which all hidden things stood revealed—where men feeling superior to their enemies were lifted above themselves."

He does not follow the subject farther here, and yet this is the path that brings us to the meaning of nearly all our pleasure in the things of landscape. There is nothing on the ground we tread that has not been associated with pleasure or satisfaction to man. The hill was safety, the cave-pierced rock refuge. Blue curling smoke meant the comfort of warmth, food, and company of his fellows; the forest gave

shade in summer, with supply of material for fire and the food to be fire-cooked. From the seashore came food that was largely used, as ancient kitchen middens testify. And unless we are prepared to believe that God created man with the vestigial organs which we possess to-day—a thing as inconceivable as that He created fossils in the state in which we find them—we must be prepared to allow for transmitted sensations over a line longer than the line of life of man as we know him, thrills from the old time when, if Darwin is a safe guide, trees were more than shade and firing to beings to whom we owe our animal part.

An objection like to that anticipated in writing of the pleasure of music is, that the griefs associated with landscape must have been as numerous as the joys. The hill that meant advantage and safety to one was a disadvantage to his enemy; it meant even apprehension of danger by him who held the height. The river and the sea that gave fish for food were associated with cold, discomfort, and danger. Everything gained involves a thought of undesirable escaped.

But the unwelcome thought is not perpetuated. It seems to be a property of the human mind to hold fast the memory of the sweet while that of the bitter fades. When this writer was a very young boy, recovering from a severe illness, he went out one day of early convalescent time to bask in the warm sunlight. But a cutting east wind blew, and for long he wandered round the house buildings in search of a place where he could enjoy the light and heat, and have safe shelter from the bitter wind. At last he found a little passage between stable and byre with a high stone stile at end, where were sheltering walls on the north, east, and west, and there he lay down. After many years he remembers not only clearly but very frequently the delight of that hour on the warm gravel in the sun. A still earlier recollection is that of the loan of a much-coveted book; how, after a race home from school, the volume was propped up

behind the plate which held the "bit dinner," kept warm for the schoolboy while said boy plunged into an exciting story of the Cortez conquest of Mexico. He remembers, and frequently, what the dinner was, and can recall the taste of it to this day. Poor little pleasures these; but they come back fresh and continually on a nod of encouragement, while the great and sore troubles of a life that has had its full share of them will scarcely come when called. One such little joy counts for more in memory than a dozen great disasters, and it has been so from the beginning. Possibly even the wretchedest life knows a preponderance of joy; a crust after two days' hunger may be sweeter than two good dinners. Pain is the great joy-sharpener. Speaking commercially, time and our nature discount the pain charges of the debit side of the ledger, while they increase the items on the credit side by compound interest.

Pat gives an example of such account-keeping from his own experience. He associates certain acts and places—to be precise, the whistling of a low, rambling, little melody and the tying of a boot-lace for acts, and a hearthstone for place—with a picture of a little brother, dead years ago, who rose in the dark winter mornings that he might learn his lessons before breakfast time. Pat's most vivid remembrance of him is as a child kneeling before the kitchen fire while he laced his boots, whistling the while a little improvised melody. After half a lifetime to see a boy kneeling and lacing his boots, to think even of the place where the boy knelt, is sufficient to bring back as a pleasant recollection the view of warm fire within while it was yet cold and dark outside, a comforting sense of servants moving about through byre and stable, the pleasant expectation of breakfast, and the figure of the little brother labouring at his boot-strings and whistling glad-heartedly his little inconsequential melody. And yet that association—only a pleasant one now—owes its permanent place in Pat's brain

to its connection with grief which is certainly recallable, but which does not come readily, and not once for ten times its old, closely-related, simple pleasure appears. The association belongs to a time when he was recovering from a long, slow fever in boyhood. One of his cousins died of consumption and her illness had been much talked of. In his weakness Pat thought he saw in his own body symptoms such as had marked the course of the disease in the case of his cousin,—he thought he was doomed to die of consumption. During the day, light, movement, occupation helped to banish his fears, but in the night, or, more correctly, in the very early hours of morning, the terrors of death took fast hold on him, and he wrestled and prayed for life. And in the loneliness and darkness what gave him comfort was the thought that in a few hours he would hear people moving in and around the house, would see the fire and his little brother lacing his boots in front of it, and would hear him whistle his little broken air—and he fought the weird spectre with this picture of normal happy life. The dread of consumption—a very great and sore trouble that winter—passed with perfect restoration to health; he can scarcely realise now how or why the terror was so great; it comes not back to him without an effort, while, with slight suggestion, the pleasant picture that helped him in the time of trouble returns, alone, again and again, with unfading colour. Here is a case from real life of a cheerful picture burnt in with one of sorrow. The sorrowful mark is the deeper for a time, but it fades out, while the joy-made one remains.

To turn to fiction. In one of her books, "Strangers by Lisconnell," Miss Barlow tells the story of the sorrow of Judy Quinlan, deserted, as she thought, by her brother Thady. She belonged to a tribe of thievish tinkers, and had no very fine feelings, but she knew what a sick heart was. She had parted from Thady in the small hours of a December morning, and had wearily footed during a long day the road

to the workhouse. At sunset she found herself on a bridge far from friend and familiar haunt, lonely, cold, despairing. There was not that evening "under Irish skies a more miserable woman than Judy Quinlan as she stood all alone in the world on Rosbride Bridge, while a black mountain rampart lifted itself slowly against the shrouded west and the dust thickened on the long, shelterless road, whence eager blasts whistled a summons to her, nearer and nearer, till they fluttered her rags and keened about her ears and chilled her to the bone."

Here was sorrow to cut deep, deep lines on consciousness. But her brother, thief though he was, had a soft heart for his old sister. He had followed her all day; for her he had stolen a cloak and hood from a woman who did him a kindness, and now he came behind her softly when her agony knew its acutest point, and threw over her shoulders the warm, soft wrap.

The pair sought shelter from the cruel wind and rain under the bridge, which "allowed the stream ample measure in its stride," and between stream and wall there was "ground bordered with stones and boulders amongst which the shallow waters gurgled." Thady had stolen eggs and bread as well as the cloak; a large, dry branch, carried down by a long-past flood furnished firing; one of the saucepans from the tinkers' stock was used to boil the eggs, and a hearty supper was made. Seated after it, warmed, fed, comforted, the rich cloak round her, its many-plied hood over her head, with her back to the curving wall of the bridge, listening to wind and rain that could not harm, listening to the tinkle and drone and chuckle and chirp of the water over and through the stones at her feet, Judy was, I am sure, as happy as any woman in the land, and if she had lived long to remember that evening she would have remembered it only as a time of joy—the sight of a bridge like that of Rosbride, the noise of water that flap flapped "like the lid o' our ould

kettle on the boil," would have brought back to her only the happiness of that satisfied hour, a happiness that owed part of its sweetness to the bitterness from which she had been delivered.

But who reads this needs not to be told that in the average life joy bulks larger in memory than sorrow. Here might be elaborated a theory that would explain much that is curious in our loves and hates, but I am only concerned now to press this home, that the marks of sorrow on memory tend to effacement while the joy marks deepen; that the average unit in the chain of life transmits associated joys or the credit balance of them after deduction made for what is due to sorrow; that we, heirs of all the ages, are the inheritors of such associated joys of uncounted generations, joys which for a period far longer than is covered by our civilisation were associated with the things of landscape, and that herein is sufficient to account in great part for that "thrill of indefinable delight" which the sight of the things of landscape is able to produce in so many hearts.

If herein is part of the answer, where is the remainder? It is found, I am persuaded, in the domain of rhythm and number. We believe that there are ears on earth that hear sounds we cannot hear, eyes that see things we cannot see. We know that when the vibrations which produce in us the sensations of tone move quicker than a certain rate per second they are silent to us. We live among countless motions that are not apparent to our senses; we are only beginning to know of the existence of waves and rays that pass over and through us, rays invisible to the eye but capable of traversing metals and other opaque bodies. Among recently discovered elements are several which have the power of producing rays invisible to our eyes, and the source of this energy is yet mystery to us. Any substance on which these rays fall is excited to give out similar rays. It is not inconceivable that, otherwise than through the medium of the five

senses, we should be conscious of the rhythmic beat of the forces that have brought us, and what we see in landscape, to the development of to-day. It is more than conceivable, it is probable, that the myriad forms of energy, which act on and through the dead earths of landscape and the vivified earths of man and beast and plant, the waves, rays, and vibrations of which eye and ear can take no account, may so act in and on us that we and these coming together shall, at times, be found to be in unison, and to be the subjects of a sympathetic vibration like that which we know of from the strings of our musical instruments.

Association, then, in the extended sense and sympathetic vibration; in one or other, or in the two combined in unknown proportion, is surely found the meaning of the earth-thrill, the reason why "a primrose by a river's brim" is more than a yellow primrose to some of us, the scientifically demonstrable cause of our turnings from the burdened life of civilisation to the older and freer life in company of rock and tree and hill, sea, lake and running stream, and to the thought of them when we are chained to the oar. The too little known poet of the Manx, T. E. Brown, after twenty-seven years at Clifton College, wrote longingly—

"I'm here at Clifton, grinding at the mill;
My feet for thrice nine barren years have trod.
But there are rocks and waves at Scarlett still,
And gorse runs riot in Glenchass—thank God!

Alert, I seek exactitude of rule;
I step, and square my shoulders with the squad.
But there are blaeberries on old Barrule,
And Langness has its heather still—thank God!

O broken life, O wretched bits of being,
Unrhythmic, patched, the even and the odd.
But Bradda still has lichens worth the seeing,
And thunder in her caves—thank God!—thank God!"

There is a thrill, a sensation communicable by the simple furniture of a country cottage, which is in some degree like that felt by the sensitive in face of the objects of the landscape. The things that belong to an old home, the place where human life has been lived for many years, have something in them too subtle for discovery by any chemical analysis.

Enter some of the cottages of the Glen. They are of all sizes and all degrees of comfort and cleanliness. Some of them have mud floors, damp, dirty, greasy, and worn in holes where the fowls are fed, some have a mud floor, dry and well swept, and some show a broad stone floor, and plentiful fire on a warm hearth-stone. In all of them are the marks of contact with the living, things worn by the touch of the humanity that there has found its home, the chair back and arm polished by hand and shoulders, the foot-hollowed stone by the doorstep, the pothook thinned at one place by the grips of women's fingers during a hundred years, the old slow-ticking clock from whose pale face the figures have nearly all disappeared, the furniture with grey hairs. Keep the inhabitants out of sight, and each house to a sensitive stranger will have a story to tell, and no two stories will be alike. The story will not be merely of poverty or its absence, of careful or careless owners, of matters of age or sex. Something more there is comparable to the earth-thrill in landscape, and this something would be missing if the cottage were furnished with new things or old, drawn from many homes. Where things inanimate are long in contact with the animate, it may be that the former receives through the latter some of Nature's mysterious streams of energy transformed perhaps by the living body, and that a collection of these inanimate things is capable of giving out again to a sensitive body part of this transformed energy, something of what has been received. There is an old belief in the possibility of articles carrying with them good or ill fortune,

stories of rings that brought evil, of precious stones that were lucky or unlucky for their holders, and mayhap these traditions are built on foundation surer than we have believed. The rays given out by that newly discovered element radium, rays that can pass through opaque bodies, are believed, at the moment, to be streams of particles of the material itself, but of particles so extremely minute that, according to M. Becquerel, millions of years would pass before a grain to the square inch would be lost. There may be still subtler streams of matter or energy flowing through us, or from us, into the things we touch; and some of these receptive things or substances may have the power to retransmit to a sensitive organism in contact these forces or energies, plus an added quality from the living body which first communicated them. I should not like to sit in a chair used long by a devil incarnate, and there may be reasons why literal sitting in the chair of the scorner is not a desirable thing. With the garment or the ring of a fellow we may become subject to an influence that tends toward or away from truth and right, may get an inclination to uprightness or crookedness of morals, a tilt in the part of us that lies nearest to the immaterial which shall make us fall in the way of good or ill fortune.

The few rhymes which follow have nothing to do with speculations on the character and causes of the mysterious impressions which we receive from our old furniture and the Nature which we call inert, but both speculations and rhymes have to do with the things we see and feel, and imagination's journeys beyond the seen and felt, and this is reason sufficient for the bringing of them together under the chapter heading of "LIFE—THE EARTH THRILL."

BEHIND THE SEEN

I KNOW a country by the sea,
Land of a wind-song loud and free.

It has hills that echo the lone sheep-bleat
And miles upon miles of the warm brown peat.

The whin with its glory of gold is there
And heather, the home of the grouse and hare.

There are burns that break from the steep hill-side
And tumble with thunder or, whispering, glide.

There is life in its breezes from over the brine,
A draught of its air is a draught of wine.

If one should offer me gift of joy,
My choice of a pleasure without alloy,

I would ask for a day in the sweet glen air,
My mind unharness'd from work and care,

I would choose me the day when first for the year
The print of Spring's footstep is sharp and clear,

And the Sun should shine in his glorious strength
From rising to setting that whole day-length.

A field freshly-labour'd I ask for now,
A field where the harrow has follow'd the plough.

I want to see near me the white gull-wing,
And to hear the crow talking, the skylark sing.

And the smouldering weed-heap's smoke should rise
Till its blue be lost in the blue of the skies.

Beside me each lovablest sight and sound,
Full length I would lie on the sun-warm'd ground.

And there, by Mother Earth lull'd, I'd rest
And feel the throb in her big kind breast.

My thoughts would take flight from the things that are
To the may be and might be, and wander far.

I would reach, I would rise to the Undisplay'd,
To the things unseen thro' the things that are made.

I would know in my innermost soul that I
Have lived and am living and never shall die.

A BIT O' PRAYER

I HAE a wee short bit o' pray'r
That's guid to drap in here and there,
Atween the daylicht and the dark,
As I gang thro' my daily wark,
Frae Janwar to December.
It minds o' One above maist true,
And what I owe to Him and you;
It's nae great preachment built for show,
It's just these five words in a row,
Lord, help me to remember.

A MAN LIKE A FIR-TREE

He was a man,
A man like a fir-tree.

You've seen the fir-tree on a wooded height
Topping its fellows, standing straight and strong,
As if the king-ship did to it by right,
O'er oak, ash, birch, or ither tree, belong.
Made by its height a mark for ev'ry stroke,
Wounded by winter blast or lightning riven,
While there remains to it an arm unbroke
The scarr'd trunk bravely holds it up to heaven.
Men call it graceless, gloomy, dark o' hue,
But in the sunshine in its time o' spring
It shows a bloom that's beautiful and blue
As any feather in the wild-duck's wing.
He was like that—strong, rigidly upright;
Lifted above his fellows o' the glen,
He saw far heaven frae a nearer height
And wi' sight clearer than the maist o' men.
He was a stricken one and bore the scars
O' wounds man-given, and o' some frae God;
For heaven strikes where imperfection mars
E'en while it loveth him that feels the rod.
Death rent frae him his branches, one by one,
Child after child and wife frae him were ta'en;
Yet when the Reaper took the last sweet son,
Godward a leal heart turnèd in its pain.
Men call'd him gloomy, rigid, hard, and stern,
Strict to extreme in what he thought was duty,
But they, the nearest, fittest to discern,
Saw in him comeliness and even beauty.

He was a man,
A man like a fir-tree.

THE HEART OF A MAN

A MAN's heart is a deep, deep well;
What's in it God alane can tell,
It's owner disna ken, himsel'.

It may be it nae solace brings,
To man or beast or bird that sings;
It may haud slimy, creepy things.

It may be clear as crystal brooks,
Mair in it than at first sight looks,
And pure as may be—out o' books.

It may be filthy, chok'd, or dry,
Be foul'd wi' mire frae paths anigh,
Death's poison in its depths may lie.

It may be hidden out o' sight,
May oft refresh the weary wight,
It may reflect a heaven's light.

A man's heart is a deep, deep well;
What's in it God alane can tell,
I dinna ken my ain, mysel'.

DREAMS ON LURIG

ON the heather—Lurig heather—
Tir'd o' tramping moor and field;
Once I dream'd,
Gazing o'er a sea that gleam'd
Like a burnish'd silver shield.

Spring had come, and o' her treasure,
Given without stint or measure,
New-born leaf and fur and feather;
Sky was sky o' purest azure,
Save where o'er the mountain lonely—
Over Lurig—one cloud only
    Like a great silk flag unfurl'd,
Like a king's white standard floated.
Swallows circled, going, coming,
By me, near, a bee was humming,
Far awa' a thrush, full-throated,
    Shared his rapture wi' the world.
Little streamlets running hidden,
Waters o' some secret fountain,
Now to share the gladness bidden,
Rush'd wi' laughter down the mountain.
And the white birds o' the ocean,
    Sweeping, swinging seagulls scream'd
In the joy o' love and motion
    As I dream'd.

Strange, that wi' this glad surrounding,
Warmth and light and life abounding,
Thought should come to me o' dying!
Yet it came—for as I noted
How the great white cloud that floated
Over me where I was lying
    Changed incessantly its form
Came a state o' apprehension,
Like that awfu', gloomy tension
    That aye presages a storm;
And I passed frae light and gladness
Into darkness, into sadness,
    Into weariness and gloom.

'Twas as if chill mist came rolling
O'er sweet June's warm, shining breast,
As if sound o' death-bell tolling
Reach'd the ear o' bridal guest.
A' within me cried, protested,
At a world that never rested;
A', I said, is loose, unstable;
None to stay an hour is able,
We move onward to a tomb;
And it seem'd
That the restless sea-birds flying,
Were no more in pleasure crying,
Rather they, in terror, scream'd
At the fearsome thought o' dying,
As I dream'd.

Then a butterfly came near,
Little Lurig mountaineer,
Like a snowflake or a feather,
Carried, wind-blown, ow'r the heather,
With a crooked, tumbling flying,
Rising, falling, ever spying
For a honey-scented bow'r,
Till the sought-for bloom was sighted,
When it hover'd and alighted
On a purple thistle flow'r.
Then my thoughts o' dying drifted
To the creature's time o' night,
And my black cloud partly rifted,
Letting in a little light.
Did it in the days sae dreary,
In its chrysalis time lying,
Feel infirm and sad and weary?
Feel as we when we are dying.
When was coming life mair gifted,

When was coming fuller sight?
May it then be truth, that story,
We have only half believed—
That we, on the day assign'd us,
Wi' the death-gate closed behind us,
Open een upon a glory
Such as may not be conceiv'd?
But the hope-light quickly faded,
Something said, "Too soon persuaded,"
And there came an eerie vision
O' a spectre moving dimly,
Laughing gently in derision
At the easily misled one.
Then he turn'd, and, smiling grimly,
Show'd me that his fleshless hand
Held a butterfly—a dead one—
Willing me to understand
That tho' forms the creature knoweth
May be many as you will,
In an ever upward striving
Dying unto living—still
At the last the perfect goeth,
Where there is nae mair reviving,
To a weary, barren land
Where he, Death, is Lord and Master.
Then he vanish'd; and the fountain
That had laugh'd and smil'd was weeping,
And the white sea-birds were sweeping
Wearily aboon the mountain
In a sunlight thick wi' gloom.
Death was in the air—disaster
Standing by an open tomb,
And I, wi' a fearfu' shiver,
Heard the distant wood-thrush sing
From the auld thorn by the river,
Death is master—Death is king.

Then, awhile, I lay forgetting
Death, the grave—the soon sad setting
O' our glory's feeble sun,
For the west wind, rous'd frae slumber,
Sang auld sangs in endless number,
And I heard them, every one;
Wordless sangs, yet telling stories
Were they—sweet, low, cadenc'd glories
Filling my enchanted ears;
Voice and flute and string sound blending
In a melody transcending,
Like the sweet mysterious sounding
Childhood in a sea-shell hears,
And my thought in magic bounding
Bridg'd the time since earth's beginning,
To the days when Order winning
Vict'ry over Chaos, saw
Dry land frae the wave divided
By the moving Spirit guided,
And a new world own her law.
And I heard the new tides beating,
Grandly, their first rhythmic blows
On new shores, and heard the tolling
Voices of wild billows rolling—
Of the giant waves retreating
As the dripping land uprose.

Then, imagination ranging
Over time fields with each changing
In the murmur o' the breeze
Brought me visions, nearer, later,
O' the early navigator;
I could hear his ship's sail flapping,
And the sound of water lapping
On the rocks of old, old seas.

Next, I heard the Northmen crying
To their gods for help in slaughter,
While the galleys in their courses,
Whipp'd by north wind, leap'd like horses
Over hills o' angry water,
Moaning, hissing, groaning, sighing,
Spindrift flying.

Now the west wind for a minute
Quieted; and for me in it
Was nae langer sound o' crying
O' the sea-wave, but the voicing
O' that host that nane can number.
Warriors, princes, poets, sages,
Rich and puir men, high and lowly,
Children, ancients, sinners, holy,
A' the deid o' a' the ages
Spoke as those who speak in slumber,
Spoke life's sorrow and rejoicing
In the murmur that I heard.
So my spirit, troubled, sighing,
Came again to thought o' dying,
And the eye, the blue lift ranging,
Sought the vapour ever changing,
But the cloud had disappear'd.
And a voice of old time, mourning,
Wail'd in tones o' anguish sair
O' our sad and short sojourning—
"Man, like cloud that vanisheth,
Going to the house o' Death,
Goeth whence is nae returning,
Cometh up again nae mair."

Lang, then, in the gloom I tarried;
When I rose, the seeking eye
Found the cloud the gale had carried
Far into the eastern sky,

Now, it was nae kingly banner,—
Wind had torn it in sic manner,
That it look'd like angel flying
In a raiment white and shining,
Gold and silver threads entwining,
Samite frae nae earthly loom;
Then connected thought o' dying,—
Angels—eastern sky—and tomb,
Brought me, quick, anither vision,
Wi' a mair than dream's precision—
Vision o' an early morning,
Wi' the holy women weeping,
Bearing myrrh and spikenard,
Timidly, in fear o' scorning,
Jeer, and flout o' Roman guard,
To the place where Christ lay sleeping;
Saw the sudden start at finding
That the stone was rolled away,
Saw the watch by angels keeping,
Heard the angel voices say,
"Death had never pow'r o' binding,
Nor the grave the pow'r to prison
Him, the Lord, for Whom you ask us,
He is over death the King.
Seek not 'mong the dead the living."
Then a wind o' memory
Carried me the comfort giving
Words o' him who met the Risen
On the old road to Damascus—
Death, where is thy victory?
O grave, where is thy sting?

He is risen, then. My fears
Fled as darkness disappears
In the sunlight, and the thrush
Far off on his hawthorn bush

By the singing, smiling river,
Sang wi' sic a joyfu' quiver
In his voice, "The Lord is risen."
It was like escape frae prison;
It was sung by all the birds,
And the sweeping sea-gulls' cries
Seem'd to shape themselves in words,
"He is risen—His shall rise."

Joy again was ev'rywhere,
In the clearness o' the air,
In the bird-life's dainty feather,
In the whisper o' the breeze,
In the humming o' the bees,
In the scent o' growing heather,
In the broad deep sea that gleam'd,
In the bubble o' the fountain,
In the sunshine over all,
As I dream'd
There on Lurig, lonely mountain,
Lurig over Cushendall.

XIX

DEATH

"I THINK the Lord has forgotten me" was the playful remark of an old, old man here, when, a little while ago, one spoke to him of his great age. But only a little while longer was he to wait. The call has since come; the Lord has remembered him.

The air of the Antrim hills is pure and life-giving, but even in it the hearse-plume nods and waves. There are homes here on the hill-tracks far from the busy haunts of men, but the "angel of the dull black wing" knows every bypath of the mountains, and none has dwelling in such lonely place that this messenger, whose touch we call Death, may not find him.

It is a pity that the great Act of Separation, by which we are freed from the things that encumber, should be known to us by a word holding the idea of negation of life. True, we say sometimes of one "she fell asleep," or of another "he entered into rest," but these are understood as poetic ways of saying "she died," "he is dead." When a fire has burnt itself out, we say it is dead; when the tree has ceased to add cell to cell, and shall never again know leafage and bloom, we say it is dead, and when our friends, as we profess to believe, have attained to more abundant life we say, too, they are dead. We need a new word, an everyday believed and believable word, for the passing into fuller life. While heaven lies about us in our infancies we are seven, even when

two lie in the churchyard. We have no doubt about existence in another state; we believe there is heaven as we believe there is Asia. But, older grown, we have learned a little about matter and its laws, and the universe seems to be such a very clever thing that we think it must have made itself. We cannot find God under the microscope, and we begin to doubt His existence. As the Great Spirit falls away farther and farther behind His work, our possession of a spiritual and indestructible part becomes an incredible thing and belief in personal immortality withers—we are really dead when the body dies. Hope comes again and again, not by taking thought, not even through the study of the words of Him who spake with authority and His witnesses—for to these last we cry back many a time over the two thousand years, "We know ye for honest men, but are ye sure ye saw and heard aright?"—it comes as a flash of light, an illuminating message from the dead white face of some one near and dear to us in life. Shall matter be indestructible and this "I" that I knew, that moved this body as it would, and knew good and evil, be blotted out? The answer is No, and faith comes back, not to be lost for ever. Brown of Clifton could write at one time in his life, "Concerning those loved ones—whether any communication with them now is possible, whether we shall hereafter know them, or 'have anything to do with them,' all this is to me the merest mist. I have to tell you now that I know nothing about 'a disembodied state'; that to me it is altogether removed from the sphere of practical considerations. I simply know nothing; I submit, I acquiesce even, but that is all. He * is gone; I have no certain ground whatever for expecting that that relation can be removed."

But after he saw his brother die he could write, "Death is not after all so terrible. It is so natural, such an action, such a part of life, that I do not believe I shall ever again

* His child.

fear it much." And, six years later, writing to the same friend, he could say, "One thing emerges—my absolute belief in immortality. I am not naturally a materialist—that is a plant not native to my mind—but scales of materialism have sometimes grown upon my eyes. They now vanish utterly, and I am dazzled and confounded by the inevitable presence, the close connatural rebound of the belief. Now I feel my body to be nothing but an integument, and the inveteracy of the material association to be a tie little more than momentary and quite casual. Death is the key to another room." *

The assurance of continued existence came with the vision of an empty house.

It was so with Sam Turley, the old flower-lover, of whom the reader has heard in the talk about *Flowers of the Field.* He lost many of his family, and sorrowed after them as even Christians sorrow, with only a vague hope that he would meet and know his own again. Then there died, suddenly and unexpectedly, one beloved by all the country-side and greatly esteemed by him—the Mrs. Brown of Pat's rhyme *Two Funerals.* Hers was the charity that thinketh no evil; her sympathy was like a deep well that refreshed all weary and thirsty souls coming to it. She died in the springtime of her life in the springtime of the year, and when she closed her eyes the world became suddenly smaller and darker for a great many. During her short illness, Sam paid two visits of inquiry daily—but, hear the story told in his own words. He speaks from the hearth of the rhymer's cottage, from that corner by the peat-fire where a chair always waits for him.

"I was just gettin' ready that morning to go doon and ask for her, when a wee lass came to tell me that she had died in the night. I went back into the hoose as one dazed;

* "Letters of T. E. Brown," Constable & Co., 1900, pp. 89, 90, 100, 101, 129.

it was as if the sun had gone doon at midday. I sat beside the fire, not speaking, hardly, until the afternoon. Then I thocht I would go and see them. It was warm and fine, and there were a hundred things on the road that I delight in, but that day I could take no pleasure in them. A half-dizzen sparrows lit on the road before me, tumblin' ow'r and ow'r and makin' noise enoo' for a hundred. At anither time I would have been pleased wi' their impident ways, but that day I was nearly angry with them. I looked up at a cloud and seemed to see 'Mrs. Broon's deid' written across it. Then I found twa or three big primroses, and pu'd them before I knew what I was about, and when I minded that she was deid I threw them away as if they had done me a hurt. Oh, I mind it sae weel; everything looked strange, as if it had shifted in the night; the dog kenn'd weel there was something wrang. When I reached the hoose they were moving about as if they were fear'd to wauken her. I was asked would I go into the room where she was laid out, and I said 'yes.' I went in to see her, and I saw—it, and a great chokin' sob rose in my throat, but no' of sorrow—no, dear no. 'That Mrs. Broon!' I said to mysel', 'never; that's no' Mrs. Broon.' I ocht to ha' kenn'd it wi' my bringin' up, but till I stood by that bonnie corpse that fresh spring day I never really felt that the body is only the hoose and that the real man or woman but leeves in it. It was no' Mrs. Broon that was lyin' before me—she was elsewhere, she was not deid; it cam' to me in a flash, and my ain were not deid; I would see them a' again. I went hame gladder than I could ha' imagined an hour before, and somehow, ever since then, I tak' sma' accoont o' dyin'. It's God's world on the ither side as this is, and we can't get out o' His world. I believe in the many mansions."

The old man's pipe lay on the floor, against the wall, beside him. As he finished speaking he bent sideways and slowly, for he was very stiff, until he had recovered it. Then

bending forward he got on his feet, the bowed little old man with the left hand over his back—the letter L upside down—and using a favourite expression which always made me think of the "My little children" of the Apostle John, he said: "Weans dear, the day's like me, it's far spent, I'll be goin'."

And when his time to "be goin'" to "the other side" shall come—may that time be delayed—his on-going step, I know, will be as cheerful and fearless as it was that night when he said good-bye to us, and stepped out into the darkness that lay between him and home.

A DREAM O' THE GREAT ASSIZE

I THOCHT that time on earth was past,
The day had come we ca' the last;
The great day o' Assize.
I saw the deid wi' silent feet
Come, troopin' to the judgment seat
For punishment or prize.
Each one in a' that mighy host,
Tho' formless, earless, eyeless ghost,
Could speak and hear and see.
I thocht I saw (a ghost mysel')
A woman there wha used to dwell
On earth no' far frae me,
And memory—no' deid—her rays
Flash'd lightning-like on Antrim days
I leev'd in years ago.
I felt again the saut sea-breeze,
I heard frae 'mang the wavin' trees
The cawin' o' the crow.

I saw the woman on the road
That stretch'd frae kirk to her abode,
A dusty summer day;
I heard the rustle o' her goon,
The creakin' o' the Sunday shoon,
As she went by to pray.
I saw the weel-tied bonnet-strings,
The wee jet butterfly wi' wings,
That on the bonnet shook.
I saw the silk-lined cloak sae good
I smell't the bit o' sither-wood
She carried in her book.
One o' the great ones o' the glen,
She held her heid richt proodly then,
She did the same the noo.
And glided wi' a careless smirk,
Like one that enters crooded kirk
Assur'd o' cushion'd pew.
An angel o' the Lord was near,
She stapp'd and spoke, I didna hear
At first what were her pleas,
But converse chang'd her look somewhat;
I cudna help but notice that
She was noo ill at ease.
Frae somethin' in the angel's gaze
It dawn'd on her that heaven's ways
Were no' the ways o' men.
She felt noo there was need to try
Her righteous life to justify,
I heard what follow'd then.

THE WOMAN.

I kenn'd the Scriptures weel.

THE ANGEL.

Sae does the muckle de'il.

THE WOMAN.
I learnt the carritch * aff by heart.

THE ANGEL.
Your father made ye dae't or smart.

THE WOMAN.
Frae gaun to kirk I ne'er abstained.

THE ANGEL.
Unless it rained.

THE WOMAN.
I gi'ed the poor my cast-aff claes.

THE ANGEL.
That disna merit muckle praise.

THE WOMAN.
I pray'd at morn and eve as well.

THE ANGEL.
Aye askin' somethin' for yersel'.

THE WOMAN.
To nae great sin gi'ed I a glance.

THE ANGEL.
Sae weel hedg'd in, ye had nae chance.

THE WOMAN.
What's writ against me, will ye tell?

THE ANGEL.
What's writ, ye've written it yersel'.

THE WOMAN.
Where at the writin' can I look?

THE ANGEL.
Ye are the writer and the book.

* Catechism.

THE WOMAN.

O help me; a' is dark as night.

THE ANGEL.

When light is sent ye'll judge aright.

Then flash'd the light on a' things hid,
It show'd us a' we ever did.

A lang wild cry the silence broke,
"I'M LOST," the woman cried—
I woke.

'THE LANG HEAPS O' GOD'S ACRE

THE lang heaps o' God's acre cry,
"Thoughtfu' or thoughtless passer-by,
Draw for a moment near;
See how the folk o' low estate,
The auld, the young, the misca'd great,
Lie a' thegither here."

Faith, it's a bonnie place to dwell,
What tales this road to it could tell,
What grief has it no' seen!
Was it the floods o' mourners' tears
Through lang grey centuries o' years
That made its grass sae green?

Some hae the earthen claes laid doon
Beneath the stanes o' kirk in toon,
But ye sleep better here.
The glorious company o' three,
The sky, the mountain and the sea,
Aye watchin' ow'r or near.

Fu' many a step life's level broke
Frae peasant up to gentle folk,
But here the steps are few;
The sleeper wi' a carven stane,
The poorer sleeper that has nane,
That's a' the diff'rence noo.

The man that has the carven stane
Made o' his life, mayhap, a pain
To save or gather gear,
The puir man may hae toil'd for love,
What walth he had was bank'd above,
He did nae bankin' here.

Here, on the tombstanes auld and worn,
Wi' broken dish and shells, the morn
The bairns hae made a heap.
These toys they play'd wi' in the sun
What care they o'—now day is done
And they, at hame, asleep.

And you beneath the stanes, ye rich,
What think ye now o' that for which
Ye late and early toil'd?
What value now the goold and lands
Ye left behind—for which your hands
Ye wore and, maybe, soil'd?

Weel for ye, puir folk o' the glen,
God's een are no' the een o' men
That see but outward face;
If ye were judg'd by walth or claes,
Or clerkly words and clerkly ways,
Yours wad be evil case.

Perhaps frae this lone mountain yerd
May rise the erst unletter'd herd,
Prince o' the new-born race.
While earth-king frae cathedral tomb
Will traivel to the outer gloom,
Or tak' a servant's place.

And some puir man laid here unsung,
That had, on earth, the silent tongue
And de'ed withoot a cry,
Tho' man took nae accoont o' him
May haud the ear o' Cherubim
In council chambers high.

Sleep on, forgotten nameless deid,
Sleep on—and tak' the rest ye need,
Sleep on and tak' your ease.
It maitters not that frien's aboon
Hae plac'd nae slabs to haud ye doon,
Nae marble tellin' lees.

THE DEID BAIRN'S SHOE

I CAM' upon a shoe the morn,
My dear wee laddie's shoe, half worn,
Put by for guid and a',
The time when he, my bonnie bird,
When he—I canna say the word,
The time he—went awa'.

He wore it last on Lugar sands;
I sat while he wi' eager hands
Heap'd treasures in my lap.
Returnin' aye wi' gleefu' laugh,
And aye this shoe had workit aff
And hung by ankle strap.

That day my child, my cooin' dove,
Was fu' o' life and fu' o' love—
He said, "It's bonnie here."
Time and again he toddled back
To put his airms aboot my neck,
And say, "My mither, dear."

O stanes and shells that sparkled gay
By saut sea-water wet that day,
That sunny hour sae brief,
How aften in the years since then
Saut tears hae made ye wet again
In shadow o' my grief!

Three years were mine frae shadow free,—
The years my laddie stay'd wi' me,
The sun shone in life's sky,
Then cam' the black, the awfu' night,
When, wild wi' terror and affright,
I saw Death creepin' nigh.

I focht wi' him to save my boy,
O Death, why envied ye my joy?
At morn ye slew my son.
A' day the wee deid hand I held,
My God, forgi'e that I rebell'd,—
He was my only one.

I thocht my fount o' tears was seal'd,
I thocht my torn heart-wound was heal'd,
But it has gap'd anew.
And frae my een the hot tears start,
And tears o' bluid rin frae my heart
At sicht o' Alick's shoe.

WHEN THE TREES WERE GREENING

In the spring in winsome guise
Cam' to me my life's great prize,
In the light o' Ellen's eyes
Learn'd I love's deep meaning.
When the land wi' joy was rife
Cam' to me the fuller life,
For I ca'd my sweetheart wife
When the trees were greening.

Leafy spring anither year,
Gave us April smile and tear,
And o' mingled joy and fear
Two could tell the meaning.
Then I saw my lov'd one lie,
Pale and happy, proud and shy,
Heard my little daughter cry
When the trees were greening.

Nigh anither year had fled,
Ellen's sleep was wi' the dead,
She had met the angel dread;
I knew grief's whole meaning.
And a lonely way I trod
To and from the sacred sod;
She, the lov'd, went hame to God
When the trees were greening.

TWO FUNERALS

Lang Dick Tamson's

It's a wet day.
The wind just roars and the sea dashes
Great clouds o' spray
Clane ow'r the way.
Man but it pours!—the rain—and splashes
The road's red clay
Knee-high and thick on mourner's breeches.
Nae use to try
To keep feet dry
Or steps to pick,
When the owld hearse grunts and pitches
The dirt flies high.
Puir Dick! Puir Dick!
We hae nae say
In choice o' day
For this decamp.
He's got a bad day for his flittin'.
I'm feer'd he'll find
The new hoose damp,
But he'll no' mind, altho' his sittin'
Is for lang lease—
The thocht o' gaun to't mak's me shiver.
God gi'e him peace.
The rain is pourin' waur than ivir.
We're clane wat through;
The dyke-sheugh's bad—the road's a river,
The wind's up too
And seems to strike
Frae ivery airt,

To drive in wind like that's a han'fu'.
The hearse is like
A wat'rin' cairt,
And dumps at iv'ry joult a canfu'
On this man's back,
Doon that man's neck,
As if we werena' soak'd a'ready.
'Tween ruts and stanes
And lumps o' rocks
And gale o' wind the cairt's unsteady,
High time it is the road was mended.
If puir Dick's banes
Can feel the shocks,
He'll wish this last bit journey ended,
And he below
A slab o' slate,
Wi' name and date
For him and his,
In lang straight row
O' graven letter.
And ended 'tis,
For here's the gate.
The grave lies in a heap o' nettles,
It's near half fu';
We're wet the noo
And will be wetter,
Up to the knees
In weeds and clay:
Wi' sic a day
And wi' a breeze
Sae boisterous,
This is the kind o' thing that settles
When death's to ca'
And rin awa'
Wi' some o' us.

They'll hae the grace
To clear a bit
That flooded pit—
A cauld wet place
To ask a man—a human cratur'—
To lie doon in;
It looks like sin
Altho' it's in the way o' natur'.
Why can we no'
At time to go
Just disappear,
Or gang aff in
A lightnin' flash.
Or wi' the win'
For charioteer,
Attain the cluds,
Leavin' nae ash
Nor corpse behin',
Only the duds?
Och, sure the woe,
The warst o' a',
Is puttin' o'
The shape awa'.
They're lettin' doon noo, steady—steady—
A wee bit roon'—
It's gye tight fit,
Ease there a bit—
There—noo it's doon,
The bit o' clay on shovel's ready.
The clargyman
Wi' book in han'
Is gaun to pray,
Hats off—hats off—
On sic a day—
O rain and win'

Stap your rampagin' for a minute—
O stap that din—
Hear that bad cough—
There's auld folk here,
Noo by the grave, will soon be in it
I greatly fear,
And a' thro' your wild wark this mornin'.
On sic a day
We weel micht pray
Wi' cover'd heid,
And hae nae blame on us o' scornin'
Or disrespeck
O' God or deid,
While the effeck
Wad be the same.
O earth, air, sky,
When kinsfolk die
And hearts are sair,
Wi' storm o' grief that needs assuagin',
Why do ye try
To hurt us mair
By flood and storm in anger ragin'?
Why, why, O why!

MRS. WILLIE BROON'S

It's a fine day
This first o' May,
Ootside o' daurs the sun's just beamin',
Inside, the noo,
He daurna keek.
The blinds are doon,
Death's been to seek
Puir Mrs. Broon.
The hoose is fu' o' black-silk'd weemin
Wi' bonnets on,

Directin' maid
Wi' nod and sign,
As if afraid
They micht awake
The one that's gone;
And rummagin' her draw'rs and presses,
And handin' cake
Wi' gless o' wine,
And gloves to him that nane possesses
Amang the men.
Its half-past nine,
They lift at ten.

The darken'd room
Is crooded fu'
O' frien's and kin
And thick wi' gloom.
The weemin noo,
On tiptoe, wi' sad lengthen'd faces,
Slip quately in
Wi' extra chairs and tak' their places,
Hands cross'd on lap,
Wi' handkerchies thet they'll be needin'
To dry the tears
Sae shair to drap
At time o' pray'rs.
The meenister's begun the readin'.
And on oor ears
The auld words fa'—
Man, woman-born,
Like dew at morn
Soon flees awa',
And noo we kneel—he's intercedin'
For them, whase hearts, he says, are bleedin'—
The left behind.

That inch o' light
Beside the blind
It gi'es a sight
O' hill in gledsome sunshine lyin'
Sae calm and sweet
Ye'd think to see't
It never heerd o' people dyin'.
And ower there
A big black craw
Is flappin' doon;
Ye hear his caw,
What does he care,
For Mrs. Broon.
The de'il a hair.
And there's the bairn,
The peety o't,
Oot playin' wi' a sarvin'-woman.
The puir wee tot
Has yet to learn
This May-day's cost.
But twa year, scarce,—
Too young to ken
What she has lost,
She kicks and craws at somethin' comin'.
It—it's the hearse.
There's the Amen.

Awa' we go
At creepin' pace,
A lang black stream
O' dool and woe;
She was a woman weel respeckit.
O it does seem
Sae far frae fit,
Sae oot o' place

And oot o' time,
A hearse—and it
The first o' May.
She in her prime,
And blythe and gay
The world aroon'.
Hoo gled the day
We micht be a'
Had only Death his wark negleckit
And miss'd that ca'
On Mrs. Broon.

Hear him rejoice
That lark up there,
The sweetest voice
That e'er had wings.
Hear how he sings
In that bright air:
He might, tho', till we pass'd hae waited.
Ye'd think he'd see
As weel as we
That Death and sang are no' weel-mated.
But no, he seems
Craz'd wi' delight.
A' else but love
Just noo is nocht,
And frae the height
O' blue above,
He's drappin' streams o' music doon,
Wi' no' a thocht
For Mrs. Broon.

That coo, beside the hedge there lyin',
I've heerd them tell,
Was sick and sair
A month or mair—

The mistress thocht the baste was dyin',
And wore hersel'
To skin and bane
Wi' anxious care
Until the coo
Was weel again.
And there she's noo,
Chewin' her cud in health, and winkin'.
Wi' lazy look
She sees us pass,
And a' the pain
The mistress took
Her to relieve,
It's no' o' it,
But o' her grass the coo is thinkin'.
For Mrs. Broon,
That's stricken doon
I don't believe
She cares a bit.

It sways and swings—
The hearse—and creaks,
The white dust clings
To boots and breeks.
The way is far,
But, bit by bit,
Short steppin' brings
Us onywhar'
E'en to the pit.
And here are we
Disconsolate
At churchyard gate,
And by the sea.
O why, to-day, should it be playin',
Kissin' the rocks,

And saft things to the shingle sayin'?
Surely it mocks
The deid and us,
By dressin' gay
And actin' thus,
This sad, sad day.
It sees we mourn
And might hae worn
Anither goon,
Or bit o' black,
Oot o' respeck
For Mrs. Broon.

Dust. Dust to dust.
The words are said,
We've laid her in
That narrow bed,
To which a' must,
At some time, win.
O great's the woe when birds are singin'
And sun shines bright,
And a' below the earth is springin'
To life and light,
That one should go
Whaur nane can see—
To death and night.
It mak's us dumb
Wi' terror dark,
E'en tho' it be
The will o' God.
To think we come
Frae sic sad wark
As puttin' doon
Below the sod
Puir Mrs. Broon.

THE WEE GREY MAN

THERE's a wee grey man aye hard at wark,
O wither'd is he and auld!
And the heart-beat stops and the eyes grow dark
At touch o' his hands sae cauld;
His clammy wet fingers, sae lean and strang,
Tak' grip o' some ere they wist,
For years ower ithers he'll wearily hang
Like gloom o' a chokin' mist.
He kills wi' a touch that seems sae sma',
When naebody thinks or fears,
And when he's expeckit he stays awa',
Ay, maybe for years and years.
How young or how auld soe'er we be,
How low our estate or high,
His word to you is his word to me,
"I'll come for ye by-and-bye."
And then ye maun leave wi' pain and fear
That hoose ye have bigg'd yersel',
Where thirty or forty or eighty year
Ye lovit sae weel to dwell.
It's sair to leave it, O sure it's sair
To gang wi' the wee grey man,
To see your bodie a-lying there
Sae changit and cauld and wan.
'Twill fa' asunder ye ken fu' soon,
At maist in a day or twa,
And people that knew ye will gather roon'
To put what is left awa';
And maybe they'll talk o' the craps and kye,
The weather it's gaun to be,
And wonder will prices o' grain be high,
Then talk o' the deid a wee.

It isn't—it isn't they do not care
For you and your lanesome weird,
Their thoughts are wanderin' here and there,
Because they are sair afeard.
I drede the day—the terrible day—
To God and the grey man known,
When I, unclothit o' flesh, tak' way
To wander awa' alone;
When, never for me, shall there be mair
The warmth o' the big peat fire,
And an end has come to my toil and care
In stable and barn and byre.
When kindly lips o' my friend or mate
Shall find that my ear is dumb,
And horses in stall in the stable wait
And wonder I dinna come.
When I have finish'd my last day's wark
In fields I have labour'd lang,
And ower the Antrim hills the lark
Has sung me his last sweet sang,
Stand by, O Christ! Stand by the day
I gang wi' the wee grey man
By that dark door and the fearsome way
That open'd when sin began;
Let the kindly airm o' my God be near,
What time I am sairly tried,
And ere I lose hold o' the hand-grasp here,
Tak' grip on the ither side.

THE RHYMER'S AFTERWORD

I would build with words as they built with stanes
Who built cathedrals lang ago;
In the darkness of painful years would lay
Thought's firm foundations braid and low.
I would choose me words for an iron pow'r,
Or a virtue of texture, or noble form,
As they chose who builded in stane to brave
The centuries' striving of sun and storm.
I would dig in the mines of the auld auld tongues
For words that are precious; for words most fair,
That hold in them beauty of thought enshrin'd
Like colour and veining in marbles rare.
Fit word should be added to fitting word,
Each one slow tested, its meaning weigh'd,
While sentence to sentence should knit in strength
As courses by mason most truly laid.
And the dim clere-story, the painted pane,
High column, strang buttress, plain rough-cut wall,
And gape of the devil-shap'd gurgoyle grim
Should find their true counterparts, one and all.
So upward this structure of words should rise,
The plan clear showing—yet much conceal'd
Should rest to be known of the heart that knows,
To eye of the seer to be reveal'd.
And crowning the work at its highest attain,
Like the cross of the spire on its golden rod,
Some word of the Spirit should stand out clear
To carry the soul-eye up to God.

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